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The Reflexive Scaffold: Metatheatricality, Genre, and Cultural Performance in English Renaissance Drama

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The Reflexive Scaffold:
Metatheatricality, Genre, and Cultural Performance in English Renaissance Drama

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

To Sara

there are not words enough

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ABSTRACT

THE REFLEXIVE SCAFFOLD:

METATHEATRICALITY, GENRE, AND CULTURAL PERFORMANCE IN

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE DRAMA

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The critical discussion of metatheatre has historically connected a series of reflexive dramatic strategies – like soliloquy, chorus, dumb show, the-play-within-the-play, prologue, and epilogue – and assumed that because these tropes all involve the play's apparent awareness of its own theatrical nature they all have similar dramaturgical functions. This dissertation, by contrast, shows that the efficacy derived from metatheatrical moments that overtly reference theatrical production is better understood in the context of restaged non-theatrical cultural performances. Restaged moments of both theatrical and non-theatrical social ritual produce layers of performance that allow the play to create representational space capable of circumventing traditional power structures. *The Reflexive Scaffold* argues that this relationship between metatheatricality and restaged moments of culture is central to interrogating the complexities of dramatic genre on the English Renaissance stage. This project asserts that a great deal of early modern English drama begins to experiment with staged moments of cultural performance: social, cultural, and religious events, which have distinct ramifications and efficacy both for the audience and in the world of the play. However, while these restaged social rituals become focal points within a given narrative, their function is determined by the genre of the play in which they appear. A play or a feast inserted into a comic narrative creates a very different sort of efficacy within the world of the play from that which is created when the same moment appears in a tragic narrative. These various types of performance give us a glimpse into the ways that early modern English dramatists understood the relationship between their works and the audiences who viewed them. I argue that the presentation and reinterpretation of early modern social ritual is utilized by many of the major playwrights of the English Renaissance, including Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Marston, Thomas Middleton, and Philip Massinger to redefine genre. These moments of reflexivity construct efficacy that, depending on the genre in which they appear, runs the gambit from reinforcing social order to directly critiquing the dominant cultural discourse.

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Citizen . . . and now you call your play *The London Merchant*. Down with your title, boy, down with your title!

-Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*
Induction, Lines 8-9

Quince Marry, our play is *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*.

Bottom A very good piece of work, I assure you and a merry.

-Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
Act I, Scene ii, Lines 9-11

Both Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* use the comic presentation of a play as a central element in their overall dramatic plots. Beaumont's play stages an intruding audience that frames and shapes the play's narrative and places one of its own members in a starring role, while Shakespeare's 'Rude Mechanicals' serve as a low comic subplot through the preparation of their own play that they in turn present to the protagonists of the central romantic plot and which acts as a coda for the play as a whole. But what are the formal functions that these seemingly similar, but also clearly distinct, dramatic techniques fulfill? And, perhaps more importantly, how are we, as readers of early modern English drama, meant to understand and discuss those techniques? The standard answer to such questions in the current critical conversation has been to begin by labeling such techniques as 'metatheatrical.' The problem with this easy label is that, since the term's coining by Lionel Abel in 1960, it has become a catch-all for reflexive dramaturgy with regard to both genre and technique. The term has become so ubiquitous that it can be applied to almost any play, early modern or otherwise. The existing critical discussion of 'metatheatre' connects a series of reflexive dramatic strategies – like soliloquy, chorus, dumb show, the play-within-the-play, prologue, and epilogue – and assumes that because

these tropes all involve the play's apparent awareness of its own theatrical nature they all have similar dramaturgical functions. This dissertation, by contrast, contends that the efficacy derived from 'metatheatrical' moments that overtly reference theatrical production is better understood in the context of restaged non-theatrical cultural performances. Restaged moments of both theatrical and non-theatrical social ritual produce layers of performance that allow the play to create representational space capable of circumventing traditional power structures.

This project argues that this relationship between 'metatheatricality' and restaged moments of culture is central to interrogating the complexities of dramatic genre on the English Renaissance stage. I assert that a great deal of early modern English drama begins to experiment with staged moments of cultural performance: social, cultural, and religious events, which have distinct ramifications and efficacy both in the world of the play and for the real world audience. However, while these restaged social rituals become focal points within a given narrative, their function is determined by the genre of the play in which they appear. An inset play or a feast inserted into a comic narrative creates a very different sort of efficacy within the world of the play from that which is created when the same moment appears in a tragic narrative. These various types of performance give us a glimpse into the way that early modern English dramatists understood the relationship between their works and the audiences who consumed them. This dissertation demonstrates that the presentation and reinterpretation of early modern social ritual is utilized by many of the major playwrights of the English Renaissance, including Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Marston, and Thomas Middleton, to redefine traditional dramatic genres. These moments of reflexivity construct efficacy

that, depending on the specific genre in which they appear, runs the gambit from reinforcing social order to directly critiquing the dominant cultural discourse.

The Problem of 'Metatheatre'

> Yet the plays I am pointing at do have a common character: all of them are theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized.
>
> (Abel 134)

Lionel Abel begins the trajectory of 'metatheatre' as a critical concept, but also as a term that is surprisingly difficult to pin down. Abel circles the concept of 'metatheatre,' but refuses to ever attempt to systematically describe it. As Richard Hornby puts it, "metadrama[1] is rarely given an adequate definition, nor is its extraordinary ubiquity appreciated, nor its many varieties categorized" (31). This problem arises from a central misconception about 'metatheatre,' which is made evident in Martin Puchner's assertion that if one "has seen Shakespeare or Calderon, Pirandello or Genet, the word *metatheatre* defines itself" (1). At some level it is this assumption that 'metatheatre's' meaning is self-evident that has made it so easy to appropriate. This has also led to problematic definitional issues with the term that in many ways make 'metatheatricality' critically moot. Hornby, for example, posits that "*all* drama is metadramatic" (31), which embraces such a broad definition that it undermines the very usefulness of the term.

Much of this ambiguity boils down to a simple unspoken question: is 'metatheatre' a genre or a set of techniques? The term carries with it a lack of specificity that is replicated by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which defines 'metatheatre' in terms

[1] It should be noted that Hornby uses 'metatheatre' and 'metadrama' interchangeably, but that is certainly not the case for all critics in this discourse.

of both genre and device.[2] While Lionel Abel and James L. Calderwood would certainly define this concept as a genre, one that is meant to bridge the gap between classical definitions of dramatic form and modernist dramatic experimentation, others use 'metatheatre' solely to describe a set of dramatic strategies. Abel clearly meant for his term to describe a new genre: "The plays I point to as metatheatre have one common character: all of them are theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized" (vi). Abel even goes so far as to dub plays that are 'metatheatrical' as 'metaplays,' just as a play that is comic would be a Comedy. Calderwood, in discussing the term he coined, 'metadrama,' gives a fairly concise explanation of how he understands the two terms and their relationship. In Calderwood's use of the term, 'metadrama' refers to drama that comments upon itself, which in effect suggests that it encompasses any play that gives us insight into the writing of plays. To use Calderwood's own words, "Shakespeare's plays are not only about the various moral, social, political, and other thematic issues with which critics have so long and quite properly been busy but also about Shakespeare's plays" (*Shakespeare's Metadrama* 5). Calderwood also references Abel's use of 'metatheatre,' which Calderwood sees as a subset of 'metadrama.' Calderwood goes on to describe 'metatheatre' as a "dramatic genre that does go beyond drama (of a traditional sort), becoming a sort of anti-form" (*Shakespeare's Metadrama* 4) being focused on "exploring the nature of contextual form and the function of aesthetic distancing" (*Shakespeare's Metadrama* 5).[3] Richard Hornby builds on this understanding of

[2] "Metatheatre / Metatheater *n.* . . . Theatre which draws attention to its unreality, esp. by the use of a play within a play; (also) those particular parts of a drama which exemplify this device" (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*)

[3] For more increasingly varied discussions of the term 'metadrama,' see Peter Milward's *Shakespeare's Meta-drama: Hamlet and Macbeth* and Bill Angus' '*The Roman Actor,' Metadrama, Authority, and the Audience*.

'metadrama,' though he does not clearly differentiate his use of the term from 'metatheatre' itself, which he defines "as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turn out to be, in some sense, drama itself" (31). As I mentioned earlier, Hornby goes on to suggest that this definition effectively encompasses all dramatic literature, but in a move that points toward the technique driven understanding of the term, he does attempt to itemize what he sees as "[t]he possible varieties of conscious or overt metadrama" (32):

1. The play within the play
2. The ceremony within the play.
3. Role playing within the role.
4. Literary and real-life reference.
5. Self reference.

(Hornby 32)

It is here that the inherent problem of Hornby's use of the term becomes completely apparent. The inclusion of all stagings of "ceremony" and "real-life reference" as potential sources of what he calls 'metadrama' effectively makes the concept so ever-present as to render the description meaningless. Hornby, much like Abel and Calderwood, is using 'metadrama' as a way to redefine genre itself, but he has difficulty, just as his predecessors did, creating limits that make his use of the term useful within the critical discourse.

On the other side of this conversation are more recent critics who see 'metatheatre' as a useful label for discussing reflexive dramaturgical techniques. Martin White, for example, while discussing the concept of *theatrum mundi* in *The Roman Actor* states that "it finds practical expression through a range of metadramatic and metatheatrical strategies such as dumb-shows, prologues, choruses, commentator figures and plays-within-plays" (100-101). For White, as for most contemporary critics,

'metatheatre' and 'metadrama' serve as almost interchangeable terms that represent a set of tropes or tactics that a playwright can employ in order to create moments that serve as a theatricalization of the theatrical in a given play. The difficulty is that most critics who use the term in this way assume that its meaning is self-evident and this leads to the label having a reductive effect. White's interchangeable use of "metadramatic and metatheatrical" is an excellent example of this issue and is certainly not limited to his work.

Paul Yachnin, for one, interacts with the two terms in very much the same way as White. Yachnin in his discussion of Marston's *Antonio and Mellida* as a possible model for how "the theatre's institutional situation translate[s] into the characteristic features of Elizabethan plays" (47) gives us a particularly good example of this issue. He goes on to describe the premise of the play's induction, in which the boy actors performing the play appear on stage, ostensibly 'out of character,' and discuss their roles with one another. He notes particularly the ways in which the boys parrot and parody the behavior of those of high rank, concluding that "Marston's meta-theatre produces a heightened consciousness of theatrical and social artifice, but never a full rejection of the system of rank" (47). As Yachnin continues to expound on his overall point he makes the following observation:

> Marston's meta-drama plays across the surface of the stage action – in the posturing of the boy actors, in their witty exchanges with each other, and in their playful mockery of the audience. It is not difficult to see how a shift in dramatic tone and stage focus, a thickening of the dramatic fiction, and the presence of adult rather than boy actors could transform this generalized theatrical self-consciousness into the kind of personal self-awareness of that we find in someone like Hamlet, a figure whose first "depth-effect" is his articulate knowing of social theatricality. (48)

These two sections highlight the basic definitional problems that the terminology of 'metatheatre' poses. When Yachnin, in the first quotation, points to 'Marston's meta-theatre,' it seems apparent that he is referring to the inherent reflexivity of the induction

itself, but if that is the case what does he mean by "meta-drama?" Yachnin chooses to shift to using the term "meta-drama" when he observes the possible connection between Marston's staging of boy actors and Hamlet's own theatrical self-awareness. It seems, at one level, that "meta-drama" is a quality or effect generated by a dramatic moment, while "meta-theatre" appears to be the strategy that generates that effect. Or, conversely, Yachnin could just be using the two terms synonymously, which, as we have seen, is not uncommon in the critical discourse, but reaffirms just how 'fast and loose' these terms are treated. This is particularly true given that in the second of Yachnin's two above quotations, he uses "meta-drama" to describe the device of the play's induction and then compares the quality of that scene to the entirety of Hamlet's character in much the same way that Abel and Calderwood do in their work on 'metatheatre' and 'metadrama,' respectively. In this case, which is by no means isolated, using "meta-theatre" as a label serves more to cloud Yachnin's argument then to convey it.

Though it is not my goal to attempt to arbitrate or debate this definitional breach, I do think it is important to recognize its existence and for me to define this term as it relates to the plays that constitute the bulk of this project. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will be using 'metatheatre' to describe a conceit, trope, or dramatic strategy that appears in a play and which calls attention to the specifically theatrical nature of the drama by in someway creating a new level or layer of performance. My definition is certainly more in line with the way the term is used by more recent scholars of Renaissance drama, but it is also strongly invested in trying to define hard limits for the term's use. 'Metatheatricality' in this coining is not intended as a way of describing reflexive dramaturgical strategies more generally, but instead is meant to describe the

games that dramatic works play with theatrical convention and the manner in which the performance toys with its relationship to its audience.

The reason I start by way of discussing the difficulties of engaging the 'metatheatrical' is that while I have strong reservations about the ways that Abel, Calderwood, Hornby, and others discuss and define 'metatheatre,' each of these critics taps into the effects that the 'metatheatrical' as trope is capable of producing on stage and these are observations that the current critical conversation should not ignore. To put it simply, this dissertation is not invested in discussing whether or not *Hamlet* is a tragedy (a subject with which Abel is intoxicated) but, on the other hand, is interested in the issues that arise from that discussion. In other words, why 'metatheatre?' What is it for? Why did it become so prevalent in early modern English drama? How does 'metatheatre' work and what purpose does it serve? Does that purpose change between plays, between genres, or between playwrights? Is 'metatheatre' inherently connected to dramatic efficacy and/or cultural hegemony and if so, how? This piece will attempt to navigate these issues as a step in developing an approach to discussing 'metatheatricality' and dramatic reflexivity more generally.

The tropes and genre-specific markers that have traditionally been classified as 'metatheatrical' are not made clearer or understood more fully due to our current use of this classification. In most cases, the use of this critical commonplace acts reductively to oversimplify the function of these formal elements and implies that all devices that fall under 'metatheatre's' purview have similar roles within the structure of the drama and similar dramatic effects. This dissertation will show that these implications are not only false, but detrimental to our understanding of dramatic literary works that activate these

tropes. Due to the impossibility of covering all such devices in one dissertation, this project will focus on the similarities that the play-within-the-play has with other non-'metatheatrical' moments in which early modern drama restages social, cultural, and religious events in order to explore the complex and varied effects that this family of tropes has as a result of their generic and dramatic contexts.

Dramatic Layering and Cultural Performance

Considering the problematic nature of this terminology alongside the clear importance of the discussion of the tropes to which these terms are often applied, this dissertation will posit an alternative approach to describing at least some of these devices under the aegis of staged cultural performance. The term 'cultural performance,' originally coined by the anthropologist Milton Singer, refers to "particular instances of cultural organization, e.g., weddings, temple festivals, recitations, plays, dances, musical concerts, etc." (xiii). Singer notes that many cultural groups:

> . . . think of their culture as encapsulated in such discrete performances, which they can exhibit to outsiders as well as to themselves. For the outsider these can be conveniently taken as the most concrete observable units of the cultural structure, for each cultural performance has "a definitely limited time span, a beginning and an end, an organized program of activity, a set of performers, an audience, and a place and occasion of performance." (xiii)

The clear social significance of these pieces of culture means that when they are restaged they lead to variations in the nature of a given play's structure. These moments when presented in a dramatic text become their own theatrical device, which I will refer to as restaged cultural performance. This classification also certainly covers a number of theatrical devices that we would traditionally describe as 'metatheatrical.' A play-within-the-play moment certainly falls under the umbrella of restaged cultural performance, but that is not to say that all 'metatheatrical' tropes fall into this classification or that all

moments of restaged cultural performance are 'metatheatrical.' In fact, these restaged moments of social ritual do not include many of the most iconic of 'metatheatrical' techniques, but like any strategy that can be described as 'metatheatre' they do result in the creation of a mimetic gradation within a dramatic work. Specifically, they create dramatic layers, simultaneous levels of performance that relate to each other within a spectrum of representation.

In order to describe this spectrum of dramatic layering, I am appropriating Robert Weimann's concepts of *locus* and *platea*, but I am using them to describe the representational nature of these dramatic layers as opposed to the spatial relationships of those layers.[4] To put it another way, *locus* and *platea* are defined for the purposes of this argument primarily in terms of their relationships to the audience and the boundaries between them are constructed through the implementation of theatrical convention and audience interaction. Weimann originally uses *locus* and *platea* as terms for describing the symbolic elements of medieval and Renaissance dramaturgy and their connection to certain performance spaces. The *locus* is what Weimann sees as the precursor to the realistic dramaturgy of the nineteenth-century, characterized by a more distinct separation of the action in the *locus* from the audience. The *locus* is characterized by the "element of verisimilitude" (75) and is where "illusion and interpretation first begin to assert themselves" (75). The *platea* on the other hand is the layer of performance that permeates that illusory barrier. Weimann actually describes it as the "theatrical dimension of the real world" (76) and it is where the action of the play and the audience have direct contact. The two new terms that I am introducing, *meta-locus* and *meta-platea* are essentially

[4] See Erika T. Lin's "Performance Practice and Theatrical Privilege: Rethinking Weimann's Concepts of *Locus* and *Platea*" for a more complete discussion of the limitations of the spatial elements of Weimann's terms.

identical to Weimann's original terms, except that they treat the *locus* as their audience (See Figure 1).

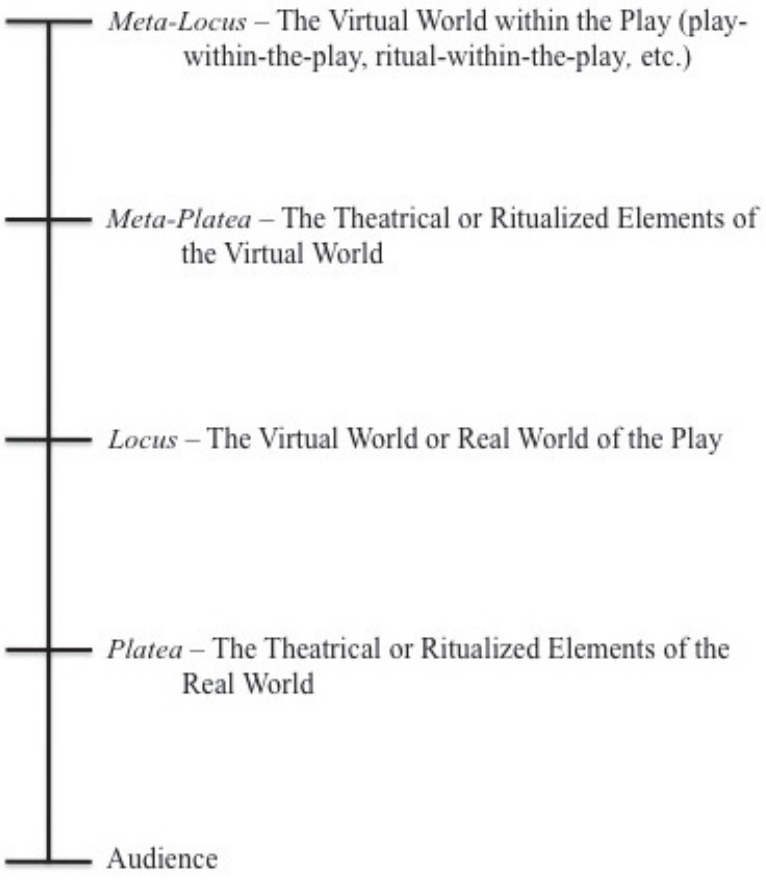

Figure 1: Spectrum of Dramatic Layering

Just as in Weimann's discussion, *platea* describes the point where the action of the drama intersects with the real world of the audience while the *locus* is characterized by the construction of a self-contained mimetic virtual world. So, beginning with the actual audience, there is clear progression through the *platea* into the *locus*, from the viewer to the boundary between the viewer and the world of the play to the world of the play itself. It is important to point out that *locus* and *platea* do not require the restaging of cultural performance; they are elements that Weimann saw as byproducts of medieval staging that were also present in early modern drama. *Meta-locus* and *meta-platea* effectively stack a

new world of the play within the play's existing structure. Thus these dramatic layers move from the world of the play (the *locus*) to the space between the play and the world of the play's staging of a cultural performance (the *meta-platea*) to the restaged cultural performance itself (the *meta-locus*). This terminology allows for the precise differentiation of dramatic layers, which in turn allows far more nuanced discussion of this representational spectrum.

Liminality vs. Alienation

When presented with this type of representational spectrum, particularly given its dependence on Weimann's critical work, it is certainly appealing to attempt to understand dramatic layering in terms of distancing, specifically alienation, but in the case of early modern English drama it is far more accurate to characterize it in terms of liminality. That is not to say that the concept of the liminal is completely divorced from representational distance, but that the type of gap it is capable of creating is not predicated on constructing an emotional disconnect. While there are individual moments in specific Elizabethan and Jacobean plays that border on Brechtian alienation, the type of liminality that Victor Turner describes is more than prevalent in the period. In fact, it would not be an overstatement to see the liminal as an inherent component in the vast majority of the dramaturgical experimentation that permeates the early modern English stage.

Unlike 'metatheatricality' the difficulty in discussing liminality is not that the term lacks definition; on the contrary, it is that it has been defined so often. Victor Turner's concept of the liminal is effectively built on Arnold van Gennep's understanding of the margin or limen as the threshold phase that he sees as one of the intrinsic steps

inherent in all rites of passage. This term takes on an added complexity for Turner, who divorces it from that specific context as a way of describing the qualities that he and van Gennep associate with that step in a ritual process. Turner describes this phase as it relates to rites of passage as follows, "the ritual subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few . . . of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social statuses or cultural states" (*From Ritual to Theatre* 24). But when Turner applies the concept of liminality of outside of the context of this specific type of cultural performance, its meaning begins to expand to encompass any productive social threshold space in which the traditional limits of cultural hegemony are provisionally either weakened or suspended: "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (*Liminality and Communitas* 79). This "betwixt and between" state allows those who occupy this cultural threshold space to potentially transform their relationship to the social structures that exist beyond the liminal space and/or create change in those structures. While its original usage points to the type of social metamorphosis inherent in coming of age ceremonies, that is certainly not the only type of change that liminality has the potential to construct. Turner describes it in artistic, industrial, and biological terms:

> Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence. (*Are There Universals* 12)

But what is perhaps most important to take away from this particular description of liminality is that it is focused on the outcome of its inherently temporary process. The liminal shares with the theatrical the fact that it exists in time and its boundaries and

limitations are inherent to its definition. A liminal figure or space cannot persist indefinitely; it is short-lived.

While theatrical performance is to some degree inherently liminal, the addition of dramatic layers beyond the primary world of the play (the *locus*) allows for a liminal space to be developed within the performance itself and completely independent of the real world. Turner sees this reflexivity as a key connection between ceremonial and dramatic logic: "Yet both ritual and theatre crucially involve liminal events and processes and have an important aspect of social metacommentary" (*Are There Universals* 8). This allows dramatic literature to not only demonstrate liminality, but also to present the kinds of efficacy that a liminal event can have on a virtual world. To put it another way, the relationship between the *locus* and the other dramatic layers in the spectrum allows a playwright to model the impact of culture on everyday life.

This modeling is in stark contrast to the discussion of distance that is so prevalent in twentieth-century discussions of political theatre and the distance constructed by dramatic layering should not be confused with the type of theatrical alienation that Bertolt Brecht describes in his theoretical works. Though a number of critics of early modern drama, most notably Jonathan Dollimore, have drawn connections between Brecht's interest in English Renaissance theatre and the period's plays, Brecht's 'epic theatre' is not the basis for the dramatic layering that is central to this argument. Dollimore's suggestion that "In some respects, as he [Brecht] recognized[,] Elizabethan drama anticipates epic theatre" (63), misses one of the key elements of Brecht's theatrical approach: practical application. Brecht saw in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries a potential for 'epic' performance derived not from some intrinsic

political critique, but from the plays' non-neoclassical structure. Brecht went to great lengths to communicate his reading of these texts to his actors and audiences when he produced English Renaissance works. His translations and adaptations of early modern English plays and his 'Rehearsal Scenes'[5] were central to his communication of his interpretation. One of the most fascinating examples of these scenes, written to help in the rehearsal process for *Romeo and Juliet*, stages a discussion between Juliet and the Nurse that takes place immediately before the balcony scene. The scene highlights the unbalanced socioeconomic underpinnings of the relationship between the two women by creating a sequence in which Juliet forces the Nurse to miss a prearranged 'date' she had with her boyfriend in order to help cover for Juliet while she cavorts with Romeo.[6] It would be inappropriate to see Brecht's reading of *Romeo and Juliet* as instructive to understanding the play in its original context, just as it is highly problematic to read any sixteenth- or seventeenth-century drama through the lens of 'epic theatre.'

Brecht's interest in the English Renaissance stage has striking similarities to his interest in non-western drama. Min Tian has noted in her reading of Brecht's interpretation of Alienation effect in the Chinese theatre, that it "was clearly used as a means to valorize and legitimize Brecht's own theoretical desires, investments, and projections" (218). Brecht's reading of non-Aristotelian theatre traditions is primarily

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[5] Added scenes Brecht wrote for use in rehearsal when he directed plays by other playwrights.

[6] Here is a small selection from that scene that illustrates the way Brecht uses the scene to highlight the underlying class tension he sees in Shakespeare's text:

JULIET.	Then you must walk up and down in here and rattle the basin as though I was washing myself.
NURSE.	But then I won't be able to meet my Thurio and it'll be all over for me.
JULIET.	Perhaps he'll be held up this evening too. After all, he is only a servant. Walk back and forth and rattle the basin, dear, dear Nerida, don't let me down. I have to speak to him. (110)

teleological, particularly because his dramatic strategies are predicated on confronting his audience's expectation of Aristotelian theatrical practice, a strategy that would have been largely lost on an early modern English audience who had not been conditioned to expect those conventions. The dramatic layering that is a direct byproduct of restaged cultural performance in English Renaissance plays at its very heart seems more invested in political alienation and emotional immediacy, which is completely antithetical to the political immediacy and emotional separation central to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*.

The dramatic distance so central to early modern dramatic reflexivity, instead of being a byproduct of presentational acting or the breeching of theatrical illusion, is a direct consequence of generic experimentation grounded in restaging social ritual and its resulting liminality. In many Renaissance plays these dramatic layers are constructed by restaged moments of entertainment that quite neatly fall within dramatic strategies that are traditionally labeled as 'metatheatrical,' but Shakespeare, Middleton, Marston, and Massinger, just to name a few, begin to expand the practice by also utilizing the theatrical restaging of moments of hospitality, sport, and religious ritual. In each case, the distance formed by the creation of layers of representation beyond the primary world of the play produce an efficacy that is dictated by the formal boundaries of the play's genre, but these layers almost paradoxically create a sort of dramaturgical laboratory in which the play is able to experiment with those generic restrictions.

This terminology gives us a vocabulary to discuss the differences between the ways that our original examples, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, navigate the play-within-the-play trope. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* begins with the Citizen and his Wife entering from the actual audience, which clearly

marks them as inhabiting the *platea*. They then in turn interact with the Prologue, who also inhabits the *platea*. But, when they demand a new play and cast Rafe in the leading role, the Citizen and his wife alter the *locus*, without entering it, and those alterations often lead the characters in the main plot to shift into the *platea* space, while Rafe spends most of the play shifting between *locus* and *platea*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, on the other hand, the 'Rude Mechanicals' never clearly occupy the *platea*; they have no awareness of or interaction with the actual audience. Instead, their play constructs a *meta-locus*, which results in the formation of a liminal space, from which they occasionally venture into the *meta-platea*, where they interact with the virtual audience of the world of the play (for example when Snug warns the ladies in the world of the play that he is not actually a lion). *A Midsummer Night's Dream* does have characters that occupy the *platea* space (like Puck), but they never create a full-blown layer that interacts with or affects the other layers of the drama. The end result of this is that the restaging of cultural performances in these two plays constructs two very different relationships to their actual audiences and in turn very different effects on the virtual world of each play as a whole. And, it is the unique interactions that these varied dramatic techniques have with specific dramatic genres that are at the heart of this project.

The body of this dissertation is organized around four distinct genres, each of which has a unique relationship to the restaging of cultural performance: Revenge Tragedy, Tragicomedy, Comedy, and Morality Play. Each of the four chapters focuses on a play or a selection of plays that falls within or interacts with that given genre and which serves as a case study. These case studies explore the specific relationship that each genre has with the restaging of cultural performance and the commonalities and differences that

appear in its use within that genre. In particular, this project delves into varied approaches that early modern English drama takes to the utilization of dramatic layering with particular attention to the ways that these layers create genre-specific effects, which either serve to reinforce generic expectations or to dissect the very structures on which genre is grounded. While the restaging of the theatrical is certainly a central element in these discussions, it is not the sole concern of this dissertation. In part, this project hopes to collapse the false opposition between the 'metatheatrical' and the 'theatrical' by showing the intrinsic similarities that the play-within-the-play device has with many other dramatic tropes that are not traditionally seen as 'metatheatrical.' It also explores some of the unique social ramifications that the restaging of culture had within early modern England. The inherent reflexivity of restaging cultural performance and the dramatic layers that result are not limited to the representation of the theatrical, and neither is this dissertation concerned only with those examples which could be loosely described as 'metatheatrical.'

The four chapters form two progressions. The first two chapters, which focus on Revenge Tragedy and the Tragicomedy of John Marston, are grounded in a discussion of the use of restaged cultural performances as a means for the resolution of plot. In the case of each genre, the representation of cultural ritual makes possible the formation of liminal space that allows that play's protagonist to overcome the potent social, economic, or political obstacles they face. That said, Revenge Tragedy takes a far more optimistic view of the potential long-term efficacy of the outcomes born from the manipulation of liminality, while Marston's tragicomic work questions the potential of such resolutions to do anything other than to manifest an unstable short-term solution.

The second progression, which is made up of the chapters on Shakespearean Comedy and Morality Play as it is referenced in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, deals more directly with the interplay between religious ritual and theatricality. Both chapters address how these two playwrights navigate the potential pitfalls of restaging religious ritual in early modern England. Shakespeare and Marlowe are engaged in narratives that require interaction with religion, but in extremely different ways. Shakespeare's comedies largely deal with plots that move toward marriage, while Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus* is exploring the very nature of salvation as well as humanity's potential ability to control or affect the divine and the diabolical through the use of both magical and religious rituals. In both cases, these playwrights turn to alternate, less charged cultural performances in order to explore these issues, while maintaining the ritual component that is so central to their respective discourses.

CHAPTER 1

LIMINAL VENGEANCE: DRAMATIC LAYERING AND THE MITIGATION OF REVENGE

In almost every discussion of 'metatheatricality,' particularly when mentioned in the context of early modern English drama, Revenge Tragedy is embraced as a natural starting point. This is not particularly surprising given that Abel's rationale for inventing the term was largely rooted in his need to find a way to describe plays like *Hamlet* that he saw as not meeting the neo-classical requirements of tragedy. But, despite *Hamlet*'s place as the default 'metatheatrical' play, it is by no means the only English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy to incorporate or experiment with 'metatheatrical' elements. On the contrary, earlier plays like Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* serve to develop a foundation for the complex interplay between the play-within-the-play and other types of restaged cultural performance. In both cases, these plays use the dramatic layers that result from staging social ritual to build distance between the audience and the taboo subject matter inherent to their respective plots. These distinctly Elizabethan forays into revenge narratives are preoccupied with inherent social critiques housed in the genre's basic assumptions, which they see outlined in the precedent set by Seneca. Both 'metatheatrical' devices and alternative inset cultural performances act in these two plays as a kind of 'screen' that reduced the immediacy of the seditious potential latent in the staging of regicide, cannibalism, and private revenge. Over time as Revenge Tragedies became more popular on the English stage the presentation of those taboos began to normalize, but the structures that playwrights like Kyd and Shakespeare had developed to handle them had become expectations of the genre. In the Stuart Revenge

Tragedies, like Middleton's *Women Beware Women* and Massinger's *The Roman Actor*, these same dramaturgical devices take on a new role. Instead of restaged culture acting as a 'screen' that distances the audience from the immediacy of the plot, these tropes become tools that the playwright can use to generate a certain type of dramatic efficacy. But what all four of these plays share is an investment in the restaging of cultural performance as a medium for exploring how individuals negotiate 'cultural competence.' While dramatic layering is in many ways a hallmark of early modern English Revenge Tragedy, it is important to appreciate the variety of uses that Renaissance playwrights developed for inset cultural performances by virtue of these devices being central to their conception of the genre.

'Screening'

> To have no screen between this part he play'd
> And him he play'd it for,
> (*The Tempest* 1.2.107-108)

Revenge Tragedy embraces the subset of dramatic layering that Shakespeare refers to as 'screens' more overtly than any other dramatic genre of the period. Prospero's use of the concept of a 'screen' is engaged with the threat posed by its absence. In the above quotation Prospero is describing the case of his brother, Antonio, who forgot his place because he was unable to differentiate the power he had been granted from his role within the societal structure. While Antonio was allowed to exercise the authority of a duke, he was not in actuality a duke at all; he was charged by Prospero, the rightful Duke, to manage Milan. The end result of this blurring of social hierarchy is, of course, that Antonio misuses this power to overthrow Prospero and usurp the social position to which that power corresponds: Duke. It is this very threat, the confusion of ability and authority,

that haunts the early modern English Revenge tradition and forces it to adopt a series of strategies that are meant to dramaturgically construct and reinforce the type of 'screens,' whose absence Prospero laments. Though these 'screening' strategies are central to the genre, that is not to say that they are necessarily employed consistently or even to achieve the same basic efficacy.

The Elizabethan practitioners of Revenge Tragedy, most notably Thomas Kyd, construct narratives that are largely built around creating these 'screens' instead of lamenting the consequences of their removal. His *Spanish Tragedy* uses a series of narrative tropes to create this type of dramatic layering that distances the action of the play from the world of the audience. Kyd's primary strategy for constructing these 'screens' is 'metatheatrical;' he builds a number of inset entertainments that construct dramatic distance. While Shakespeare's lines are metaphorically discussing breaches in social hegemony in the terminology of the stage, Kyd's play does exactly the opposite. It uses the distance and stability constructed through these layers and the fiction they reinforce to safely navigate the socially taboo elements that permeate the main plot. The most central of these taboos, revenge itself, is made both more palatable and more entertaining through Kyd's use of a series of 'screening' strategies that construct dramatic distance, culminating in the play-within-the-play, which constructs a liminal space that acts as a catalyst for the final moments of revenge. These moments are paradoxically both made more feasible and less possible at the same time. The 'doubleness,' which both Anne Pippen Burnett and Eugene Hill note as a distinctive trait of early modern English Revenge Tragedy, is both reinforced and constructed by this embracing of 'screens' as a solution to narrative impossibility.

For the playwrights that follow Kyd, these 'screening' strategies become a generic commonplace. Shakespeare notably employs and develops many of Kyd's dramatic devices in his own early Revenge Tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, which builds on the conventions of courtly masque and the social rituals associated with feasting to construct similar distancing effects. But, as the genre's popularity grew and its potential for inciting and condoning private revenge waned, these vestigial structural conventions remained, becoming the basis for many of the hallmarks of Jacobean Revenge Tragedy. These 'screens,' which in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* are grounded in a very practical hegemonic efficacy, become for later playwrights of the genre a structural inspiration that leads to the construction of aesthetic spectacles of violence for which early seventeenth-century tragedy is infamous. To use Steven Simkin's words,

> . . . the genre's [Revenge Tragedy's] taste for episodes of extreme (and endlessly inventive) violence has . . . earned it the casual and dismissive labels 'decadent,' 'exploitative,' and 'gratuitous'. (5)

To discuss the structural strategies at play in Revenge Tragedy and their development over a relatively short space of time, this chapter will discuss the manner in which these 'screening' strategies appear in Kyd's extremely influential *Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* as well as how those tropes are utilized decades later by Thomas Middleton in *Women Beware Women* and Philip Massinger in *The Roman Actor*. In all four cases, these playwrights use structural 'screens,' formed primarily through the development of restaged moments of culture, to construct layers of representation within their respective plays.[7] While each work uses this distance to completely different ends,

[7] For more information about dramatic layering and the language this project is using to discuss it see the Introduction (10-12).

the layers they construct allow each play to develop a liminal space where traditional authority is replaced by the potential mastery of individuals over cultural practice.

The 'screening' and its resulting distance, which are so central to early modern Revenge Tragedy, result from the use of restaged social rituals that are utilized to frame action. In *The Spanish Tragedy* those layers are constructed by restaged moments of entertainment that quite neatly fall within dramatic strategies that are traditionally labeled as 'metatheatrical,' but Middleton, Shakespeare, and Massinger, as well as many of the other playwrights that follow Kyd, begin to expand the practice by also utilizing the theatrical restaging of moments of hospitality, sport, and religious ritual. In each case, the distance formed by the creation of layers of representation beyond the primary world of the play produce an efficacy that manages to hold on to emotional immediacy, while potentially distancing the audience from the practical and political ramifications of the play's action. In other words, Revenge Tragedy embraces a paradox. Its plot structure embraces an emotionally feasible arc while separating the audience from the practical possibility of emulating those actions.

Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and the Problem of Revenge

Revenge was a very real and significant issue in early modern England. Approximately one hundred years before the writing of Thomas Kyd's play, Henry VII (Elizabeth I's grandfather) had introduced what we would recognize as the framework for modern Western criminal law. The indictment system shifted much of the responsibility for the enforcement of punishment for violent crimes from the family of the victim, as dictated by Norman law, to the state. The Norman appeal system also allowed the accused to elect trial by judicial combat, meaning that the victim's kin who were required

to bring the charges would be forced to find an individual who would fight with and defeat the alleged murderer in order to prove their case (Bowers 6-8). To put it simply, revenge was not only accepted, as long as it was properly adjudicated within the bounds of the Norman legal code, but it effectively formed the basis of their criminal legal system. It is no wonder then that when Francis Bacon took up the subject of revenge around the turn of the seventeenth century, he said that "Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to it, the more ought law to weed it out" (14). Bacon, like many of his Elizabethan peers, was aware not only of how deeply the Norman system had permeated the early modern English consciousness, but also how potentially threatening that "wild justice" was to the authority of the state.

The passage of a century had done little to remove the cultural view that violent acts were seen as crimes perpetrated against the victim's family, which placed a great burden on the Elizabethan legal system to punish these offenses in order to prevent private retaliation. As Fredson Bowers puts it,

> Elizabethan law felt itself capable of meting out justice to murderers, and therefore punished an avenger who took justice into his own hands just as heavily as the original murderer. The authorities, conscious of the Elizabethan inheritance of private justice from earlier ages, recognized that their own times still held the possibilities of serious turmoil; and they were determined that private revenge should not unleash a general disrespect for law. (Bowers 11)

Although revenge was certainly in the process of becoming a cultural taboo, its inappropriateness was largely a byproduct of the state's authority, an authority that interestingly enough communicated its potency and distributed its hegemony through the performed violence of public execution. In fact, in some ways, the shifting socioeconomic climate of Elizabethan England exacerbated the cultural inheritance of private revenge in the period. The revival of chivalric customs along with the growing

popularity of the Continental 'duel of honor' in the last twenty years of the sixteenth century not only brought with it a rejuvenation of many of the ideological foundations of Norman justice, but also paved the way for a cultural moment rife with potential conflict. While recent scholars have rightly seen these cultural movements as distinct and argue that late sixteenth-century English culture drew a clear distinction between judicial and honor combat,[8] the outcome of these cultural shifts was an historical moment in which private violence escalated and threatened to undermine the foundations of Elizabethan law.

In addition to the revival of chivalric culture it is important, as Linda Woodbridge points out, to recognize "the era's passionate response to tyranny, with which strong Renaissance rulers, like the Tudors with their centralized authority and enforced religious conformity, were routinely charged" (129). As the many Revenge Tragedies show, there is a slippery slope between personal revenge and tyrannicide, which of course in the eyes of any tyrant is regicide. As the late sixteenth century saw a growth in resistance movements across Europe, it became an increasingly popular subject, but also one that if navigated incorrectly could have extremely serious consequences.

Consider for a moment the social climate that these issues construct in a playwright's potential audience. This is an audience that still carries vestigial cultural conditioning that expects and justifies revenge. This is an audience that has become not only accustomed to the sight of actual violence, but has been taught to see that violence as entertainment. This is an audience that has been expressly forbidden to take part in revenge or any other violence not authorized by the state. And in addition, this is an

[8] See Arthur Ferguson's *The Chivalric Tradition in Renaissance England*, Markku Peltonen's *The Duel in Early Modern England*, and "Dueling and the Court of Chivalry in Early Stuart England" by Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper.

audience that is increasingly interested in the injustices of tyranny and potential solutions for it. That given, how does a playwright take advantage of this social fascination with murder, vengeance, and political resistance without being seen as inciting the "general disrespect for the law" that Bowers acutely observes is the principal threat of private revenge in Renaissance London? One answer to that question can be found in the style of Revenge Tragedy that became popular in the late sixteenth century and is exemplified by Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Kyd's schematic for the Revenge Tragedy is as much a product of his own historical moment as it is an attempt to pattern his play after classical sources. In addition, many of the defining qualities of the Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy are direct byproducts of the play's attempts to walk the fine line between titillating the audience and inciting the ire of the Master of the Revels. Some of the dramatic strategies that the play uses for this purpose are clear commonplaces of the period (arguably because of their appearance in *Spanish Tragedy*); they are the play's non-English setting, the audience's awareness of the perpetrators' guilt, and revenger's madness. In each case, these dramaturgical choices serve to reinforce the different forms of dramatic distance that are constructed in the text through three specifically 'metatheatrical' moments: the classical frame narrative, the masque that Hieronimo stages in Act I, Scene iv, and the play-within-the-play that serves as *The Spanish Tragedy*'s climax. These moments produce a series of dramatic layers, which are the catalyst for the paradoxical effect that allows for the feasible impossibility that I mentioned above. These dramatic layers are best described as simultaneous levels of performance that relate to each other within a spectrum of representation. They serve to build a virtual world that exists outside of early

modern English cultural norms and, at the same time, these same layers act as the mechanism by which the rules of that space are disrupted. Thus the restaged stage builds a world in which revenge is necessary and then creates another virtual space that acts as the means to enact that revenge.

The first of our three 'metatheatrical' moments, the classical frame, is a distinct example of *platea*. The play's opening chorus begins with Don Andrea's ghost telling the audience and the Spirit of Revenge the manner of his unfortunate death at the hands of the Portuguese Prince and the details of his journey through the classical afterlife where he meets Charon, Cerberus, Pluto, and Persephone, but the scene culminates in Revenge's lines about his and Andrea's roles in the story that follows,

> Revenge — Then know, Andrea, that thou art arrived
> Where thou shalt see the author of thy death,
> Don Balthazar, the prince of Portingale,
> Deprived of life by Bel-Imperia.
> Here sit we down to hear the mystery,
> And serve for Chorus in this tragedy. (1.1.86-91)

Revenge informs Andrea that his role in this play is to sit, watch, and comment. This trope has two important effects on the audience's perception of the rest of the play as a whole: first that the viewer begins a play set ostensibly in the sixteenth century with a scene that clearly sets its action in the logic of a non-Christian religious construct, and second that the viewer will share the experience of this play with these staged audience members. While the scene is a thinly veiled reference to the Chorus of Seneca's *Thyestes*, which involves Tantalus' ghost being forced by a Fury to watch and inspire the destruction of his own family, the specific reference is far less important than the religious and cultural lens it represents. Now the audience is free to imagine how revenge would act in a world without the providence and divine justice central to its distinctly

Christian and presumably Protestant worldview. Instead of setting the scene, the Chorus serves to set the genre and by doing so invites the overlay of Senecan logic. No matter how the audience views real-world vengeance, *Spanish Tragedy* creates a non-real world that operates on the assumptions of classical religion so that Hieronimo, Andrea, and Bel-Imperia cannot rely on God for justice.

The Spirit of Revenge also immediately points out and reinforces to the audience the theatrical nature of the main action of the play by telling Andrea that they will become the Chorus and audience for the play's action. The inclusion of this staged audience in the *platea* immediately distances the audience from the world of the play presented in the *locus*. In effect, the immediacy of the *platea* makes the audience question the potential mimesis found in the *locus*, particularly given the play's move to insert the action into a classical worldview. Andrea and Revenge's reappearances, which occurs at the end of each act, serve as a reminder to the viewer of the play's inherent narrative structures and act as a consistent cue that the world of the play and the real world do not operate by the same theological rules.

The second of these 'metatheatrical' moments is Hieronimo's masque of the Three Knights, in which we get our first glimpse of *meta-platea* and *meta-locus* in the play. In Act I, Scene iv, the King of Spain is entertaining the Portuguese ambassador after Spain's victory over its Iberian neighbor. The King invites Hieronimo, who is the Knight Marshall but appears to double as the court's playwright in residence, to present a masque. The entertainment that follows involves the staging of three historical English knights, each of whom is introduced by Hieronimo, who then describes each of their military successes. The first two are praised for their triumphs over the Portuguese and

the third, John of Gaunt, for his victory against Spain (1.4.140-167). While this sequence certainly functions to seed Hieronimo's position as court dramatist, serving to justify the climactic play-within-the-play, its immediate effects on the narrative are equally important. The three knights reinforce the geographical distance of the play from England in very much the same way that Andrea's ghost and Revenge reinforce the theological distance. Not only are the nations depicted in *Spanish Tragedy* set in stark contrast to Englishness; they are also both clearly marked as militarily inferior. This inferiority serves as yet another basis for the necessity of the primary revenge plot; Spain and Portugal not only lack the martial ability of the English, they also lack the judicial system necessary to eliminate the need for revenge. But perhaps the element of this sequence that is most revealing is the fact that Hieronimo's descriptions of the three knights are necessary at all. Upon seeing the performers appear, the King says, "Hieronimo, this masque content mine eye, / Although I sound not well the mystery" (1.4.138-139). Each of the knights in the masque is carrying his scutcheon, or coat-of-arms, and gives it to the King, but he is unable to decipher their importance. This sequence suggests that the King of Spain, as well as the Portuguese Ambassador and the rest of the staged audience, has a difficult time interpreting Hieronimo's performance, which in this case occurs in the *meta-locus*, and requires the playwright's mediation in the *meta-platea* in order to make sense of the masque. And it is the control that this lack of understanding grants Hieronimo that allows for the construction of liminal space that makes possible his revenge at the end of the play.

The final and most famous of these 'metatheatrical' moments, Hieronimo's staging of *Soliman and Perseda* in Act IV, Scene iv, builds on the layering of the

aforementioned moments to create a fully autonomous *meta-locus* that uses liminal space to build feasible impossibility. To put it in other words, the play-within-the-play serves as a ritualized threshold space, which allows for permanent transformation to occur within the world of the play. The suspension of traditional authority is replaced with the rules of the drama, which due to the play being performed in "sundry languages" (4.4.10-11), is impenetrable to the virtual viewers of the *locus*. But at the same time, the liminality of the restaged performance in the *meta-locus* reinforces the fictional nature of the *locus* itself and undermines the potential social change that is being enacted. The audience is drawn into the fiction of vengeance while being distanced from the possibility of participating in that violence.

The basic conceit of Hieronimo's plan is simple: Balthazar and Lorenzo, the two princes that conspired to kill Hieronimo's son, are cast as two of the main characters in the play, Soliman and Erasto, respectively. When in the action of the play-within-the-play each is to die, Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia, each in character, kill one of the two princes and then Bel-Imperia commits suicide. This action all occurs in the dramatic layer furthest from the audience, the *meta-locus*, and the viewer is potentially at this moment of revenge confronted with two additional audiences: the King of Spain, Viceroy Portugal, and Castile who occupy the *locus* and, depending on how the play is staged, the Ghost of Andrea and the Spirit of Revenge in the *platea*. At this point in the scene, there is no distinct *meta-platea*, but as the scene progresses Hieronimo will develop that representational layer once the inset performance concludes. Each of these virtual audiences reinforces the 'screens' or thresholds between those dramatic layers and the dramatic distance between the action of the play-within-the-play and the real world.

These overlaid 'screens' serve to obscure any mimetic qualities that the *meta-locus* may possess, instead replacing them with a liminal space that cultivates intellectual distance.

The first step in this process appears one scene earlier in Act IV, Scene iii. Here Hieronimo is putting the finishing touches on his preparation for the performance by discussing the final arrangements with the Duke of Castile. It is here that Hieronimo asks Castile to deliver to the King a "copy of the play: / This the argument of what we show" (4.3.6-7). While the primary purpose of this gesture is to offer some means for the King and Viceroy to understand the "unknown languages" (4.1.173) that the play is being performed in, it also offers a skewed lens through which those characters are meant to understand the action of Hieronimo's play. It serves, through dramatic irony, to offer a manipulated stand-in for the *meta-platea* that we see in the scene with the English knights. Instead of Hieronimo acting as a sort of chorus in the *meta-platea*, the book offers that framing. The audience, who is denied this written information, is able to interpret these actions more accurately. The King's earlier inability to interpret performance reinforces the importance of this mediation and points to the distance between virtual layers, which in turn reinforces the distance between performance and the real world.

As the scene continues, Balthazar, the Portuguese Viceroy's son, enters and begins to set up the stage for the performance. As he enters, Hieronimo gives him direction:

Hieronimo	. . . Well done, Balthazar; hang up the title. Our scene is Rhodes – what, is your beard on?
Balthazar	Half on, the other is in my hand.
Hieronimo	Despatch for shame, are you so long? (4.3.17-20)

Even here in the preparation for the performance we start to see the liminal space constructed by the restaged theatrical event that is beginning to form. The first, and most obvious, element that this passage highlights is Hieronimo's authority. Balthazar, a high-ranking Portuguese nobleman, is here taking orders from a man who is significantly beneath Balthazar's station. It should also be noted that he is not just taking orders; he appears to be doing so completely willingly. One of the other elements of this passage that points to the beginning of this transition from *locus* to *meta-locus* is Balthazar's false beard. The partialness of its application highlights the transitional nature of the scene and to Balthazar's shift from a position of control to one of subordinance. The power of this sequence is reinforced by Hieronimo's pun, "hang up the title," which is not only a potential reference to the placing of title-boards to set the scene (Mulryne 113), but also points to the fact that during the performance rank and title are suspended in the virtual world of the restaged theatrical event. In effect, Hieronimo is gesturing to the fact that the *meta-locus* suspends conventions of the *locus* and allows an alternative boundary logic, which places him, because of his mastery of the conventions of dramatic performance, in almost absolute control of that liminal space.

That control is most clearly demonstrated during the performance of Hieronimo's *Soliman and Perseda* and in the transition from that *meta-locus* layer into the *meta-platea* and eventually back into the *locus*. Hieronimo's control over the performance is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that his plan works perfectly during the play-within-the-play. The two murderers are killed in front of their fathers, as well as the King who is Lorenzo's uncle. They are so incapable of penetrating Hieronimo's play that they in fact applaud the killing of their own children:

King	Well said, old marshal, this was bravely done!
Hieronimo	But Bel-imperia plays Perseda well.
Viceroy	Were this in earnest, Bel-imperia, You would be better to my son than so. (4.4.68-71)

The Viceroy's directing of his line to the now dead Bel-imperia makes plain how complete his misreading of the inset performance actually is. The Spanish King's repeated inability to accurately interpret in both this scene and the earlier performance of the three English knights again places Hieronimo in a position of authority that transcends his rank and title in the *locus*. Hieronimo, even though he performs the role of Soliman's servant in the play-within-the-play, is effectively elevated to the position of monarch because of his influence over its performed framework. But even as these three men applaud Hieronimo for murdering their children, the closing of the liminal space, constructed by the restaged performance, places Hieronimo in a very similar role to the one he inhabited in the first entertainment, that of interpreter.

Just as when the Spanish King found himself unable to decipher "the mystery" of the scutcheons in Act I, Scene iv, Hieronimo places himself in the role of translator and proceeds to transition from the now passed *meta-locus* into the *meta-platea*, and in so doing begins the process of shedding his control over the action of the scene. To put it another way, as his position moves closure to the central virtual layer of the play, the *locus*, his authority diminishes until he is forced to struggle physically against the authority of the King and Viceroy, which he was able to completely circumvent in the world of the restaged play. Hieronimo's epilogue to *Soliman and Perseda* consists of the same detailed explanation of the performance that he offered in his elucidation of the three English knights. And just as in that scene, the seemingly conventional nature of

Hieronimo's framing of the virtual play reinforces the importance of the audiences that sit on the stage between the actual audience and Hieronimo. The staged royal audience and the potentially staged audience of the Senecan frame set up a series of 'screens' which distance the viewer from the now aestheticized revenge that has occurred. But as Hieronimo's epilogue returns him to the *locus* with his discussion of his son's death, the presentation of his body, and the revelation of the revenge that Hieronimo has orchestrated, the staged royal audience transitions from confused viewers to enraged participants. Thus, once Hieronimo completes his monologue he is completely returned to the hegemony of the *locus* and his attempt to retain the authority he held in the performance by killing himself is thwarted.

The separation of Hieronimo's stabilizing suicide from the aesthetic realm of his staged revenge emphasizes the importance and immediacy of the death of the revenger, while distancing the audience from the very revenge he takes. The potential social threat of revenge is muted, but the fantastic spectacle of the climax is reinforced. The liminal space of this climactic cultural performance replaces the socially disruptive potential of revenge with an aestheticized spectacle of vengeance, reinforcing violence's position as entertainment while distancing those who watched the spectacle from violence itself. Hieronimo's struggle to kill himself, highlighted by his biting out of his own tongue and his murder of the Duke of Castile before dispatching himself with a penknife, constructs a resolution that reinforces the potency of the state to restrain and potentially thwart the revenger that seemed completely absent during the play-within-the-play. Hieronimo's final struggle emphasizes his tragedy, while the restaged cultural performance that distances the audience from the murders of Lorenzo and Balthazar obscures the threat of

private revenge. While late sixteenth century viewers of *The Spanish Tragedy* would certainly recognize the private revenge of the narrative as a type of justice, the classical logic of the play's setting and the liminal nature of the final acts of vengeance would have cemented that audience's inability to legitimately access similar acts of retribution.

Hospitable Revenge in *Titus Andronicus*

Shakespeare's first major foray into the Revenge Tragedy genre, *Titus Andronicus*, while clearly influenced by the distancing strategies pioneered by Kyd, replaces *The Spanish Tragedy*'s empowering of 'metatheatrical' 'screening' strategies with an emphasis on the efficacy of social ritual. In *Titus* it is the ceremonial expectations of the culture that justify violence and create the 'screening' effects that distance the audience from the potential of justified private revenge. Those versed in the expectations of Roman culture are able to use that culture to mediate the violence necessary to achieve justice, while those who operate outside of those cultural expectations commit abhorrent acts of revenge that remain 'un-screened.' While many critics have traditionally seen the play as constructing "a 'barbarous' world without comprehensible order" (Neill "What Strange Riddle's" 238), *Titus* instead uses the 'screening' created by distinctly Roman cultural performances, particularly those associated with hospitality, to create a detached virtual world in which the horrifying violence of the action is comprehensible and where it is the mastery of social convention that allows for private justice, though distanced from the audience, to function. The feasible impossibility at the heart of *Spanish Tragedy*'s 'metatheatre' is divorced from the stage in *Titus* and connected to non-artistic social convention, while the potential efficacy of dramatic performance is misinterpreted by those characters that attempt to embrace it.

Titus Andronicus is certainly not the first Revenge Tragedy to use hospitality to construct the type of liminal space that Hieronimo utilizes in *Spanish Tragedy*. Feasts and the customs associated with them are in fact one of the more common tropes that the genre uses as the catalyst for revenge largely because of the precedent set by Seneca's *Thyestes*. And much like the performance of a theatrical event, the expectations of hospitality invest a great deal of authority in the organizer, in this case the host or hostess. But, unlike the efficacy constructed in the dramatic layering created in *The Spanish Tragedy*'s inset *Soliman and Perseda*, moments of hospitality in *Titus*, particularly the final banquet, seem to construct spaces that do not invert power structures as much as they create a more level playing field. As Daryl Palmer puts it, "the banquet ought to contain the host's enemies, but time and again the action expands to permit an undoing of the host. The banquet does not digest its divergent courses. It only heightens vulnerability" (175). While the dramatic layers constructed in the play do serve to privilege those versed in the customs that construct those layers, particularly in terms of how that layering mediates violence, they do not grant the type of dominant authority that Hieronimo appears to wield in the restaged theatrical layers of *Spanish Tragedy*. Instead, we see both the more villainous and the more heroic characters in the play attempting and occasionally succeeding to use these customs to wrench control away from their adversaries.

In order to discuss these issues, this section will focus on three specific moments of restaged cultural performance in *Titus Andronicus*: the initial reception of Titus as he returns to Rome in Act I, Scene i, Tamora's performance of Revenge in Act V, Scene ii, and Titus' banquet in Act V, Scene iii. In each of these examples, Shakespeare constructs

contested liminal dramatic layers that allow both for the inversion and reinforcement of existing power structures. These moments all in one way or another transform hospitality and entertainment into a battlefield, where troop movements and military tactics are replaced by the maneuvers of courtesy: "In the practice of hospitality, tactics abound" (Palmer 7). Titus' early losses are a byproduct of his assumption that he has returned from war to a place of peace, while the efficacy he generates near the end of the play is a byproduct of his divorcing his mastery of Roman social and cultural convention from his devotion to the hegemony those structures communicate.

The first act of *Titus Andronicus* begins with a series of social rituals stacked end to end. The single scene that makes up the entire act starts with a string of consecutive events that reinforce the understanding that the actual audience is meant to stand in for the people of Rome: the entrance of Saturninus and Bassianus who are rallying their political supporters; Titus' victory parade; the burial of Titus' sons; which includes the ritual sacrifice of Alarbus; Titus' decision to refuse his election and invest Saturninus; Saturninus' public taking of Lavinia for his wife and his praise of Titus; the pledge that Titus makes to Saturninus and the granting of Titus' prisoners to the new Emperor; and Saturninus' freeing of Tamora. Each of these separate social rituals elides from one to the next, just as the scene's geography seems to glide instantaneously from place to place. Also, in all the restaged moments of cultural performance until Titus' decision to invest Saturninus, Titus, through his reputation, past use of military skill, and cultural proficiency, is granted authority and control. But, unlike Hieronimo's mastery of 'metatheatrical' performances, Titus is clearly endowed with authority by the political structure of the primary world of the play. In each case Titus honors social convention

and uses it to justify his decisions and in so doing reinforces the cultural structures that grant him the authority that he exercises. From the moment Titus enters with his train, he is participating in restaged rituals that place him in a *meta-locus*, with Saturninus, Bassianus, and Marcus in the *locus*. As the act progresses, characters shift from *locus* to *meta-locus* and vice-versa as the rituals that dominate the central action change. Tamora is perhaps the best example of this rapid movement between dramatic layers. She begins as part of the returning army and as a central element of that group's display of victory in the *meta-locus*, but once Titus begins to orate, she, like the rest of the procession, becomes his audience in the *locus*. By the time the burial ritual begins and Alarbus is named as sacrifice, Tamora attempts to intervene by trying to insert herself into the ritual taking place in the *meta-locus*, but due to lack of both cultural proficiency and actual authority, her insertion in the *meta-locus* is short-lived and her role becomes one of contextualizing the ritual sacrifice in the *meta-platea*, "O cruel irreligious piety!" (1.1.130). Once the sacrifice of Alarbus concludes, Tamora transitions back to the *locus* until granted authority by Saturninus near the end of the act when he proposes to her, "Behold, I choose thee, Tamora, for my bride, / And will create thee Empress of Rome" (1.1.316-317). Saturninus' 'creation' of Tamora as his Empress also constructs her as a potent actor in the social rituals that construct much of the rest of the act. By the end of the scene Tamora is the one who offers advice to Saturninus on how to navigate the public nature of the cultural performances with which he is forced to interact:

> Tamora My lord, be ruled by me, be won at last,
> Dissemble all your griefs and discontents.
> You are but newly planted in your throne;
> Lest then the people, and patricians too,
> Upon a just survey take Titus' part,
> And so supplant you for ingratitude,
> (1.1.439-444)

Here Tamora emphasizes to Saturninus the importance of appearance in his execution of social ritual and that he, unlike Titus in the earlier part of the play, should embrace a duality between his ritual persona and his actual feelings. It is 'dissembling' that separates Titus' uses of social ritual in the first act from Saturninus, Tamora, and Aaron's manipulation of cultural performance throughout the play. Titus seems incapable of separating his public appearance from his personal feelings and it is this inability to 'dissemble' or to use the power granted him to cement his authority or grant it in a self-interested or nepotistic manner that allows Saturninus and Tamora to outmaneuver him in the public arena.

The effortlessness of the authority granted Titus in the first half of the act, which derives from what appears to be the conventional social order,[9] reinforces Titus' trust in the status quo and leads him to the tactical error of choosing Saturninus as Emperor. From the very first moments the new Emperor is invested, his decisions veer from the culturally prescribed script, particularly in his choice of a bride; Saturninus forcefully proposes to both a woman engaged to his brother and an enemy of the state. Titus, on the other hand, follows the rules that define the Roman state to what may appear to be a ludicrous extreme. He kills his own son, Mutius, for questioning the authority of the cultural structures that define the state. This is reinforced by Titus' explanation of the act when confronted by his son Lucius,

> Titus Nor thou [Lucius] nor he [Mutius] are any sons of mine.
> My sons would never so dishonour me.
> Traitor, restore Lavinia to the Emperor.
> (1.1.290-292)

[9] The normalcy of the election of Titus and the power granted him to choose the next Emperor obviously do not mesh with actual Roman history, but they are presented as such by the text. Neither Saturninus nor Bassianus object to the logic behind these social structures and appear to accept them as conventional.

Titus, during the rising action, places so much emphasis on the importance of the connection between the letter and the spirit of the social order that he is willing to sacrifice his own children to maintain it. Titus labels his sons as "traitors" since they've breached the letter of that order largely because he is unable, at this point in the play, to conceive of the potential threat posed by an authority figure who disregards the spirit of that code. Mutius' death, unlike the other violence perpetrated by Titus and his family is unmediated, but while that may make it more difficult to empathize with Titus, it is one of the least politically subversive of the killings with which he is involved. In effect Titus has not yet realized what Hieronimo seems to understand innately, that power can be derived from the dissociation between the rules that govern the *locus* and the *meta-locus*. In other words, Titus still naively believes that there are no true distinctions between dramatic layers other than who's watched and who's watching and it is this misconception about how the world works that allows Tamora and Aaron to so effortlessly implicate, rape, and maim the Andronici over the course of the second and third acts. It is only once Titus loses all faith in the Roman political system, which coincides with his apparent madness near the end of Act III that he begins to develop a more complex understanding of the implications of cultural performance. While *The Spanish Tragedy* relies primarily on the distance constructed by dramatic layering to create the 'screening' that stabilizes its plot, *Titus* augments that dramatic strategy by emphasizing Titus' seeming reliance on madness to understand and manipulate those layers. Hieronimo's mastery of inset theatrical performance precedes his madness and his disillusionment with the state, while Titus' ability to invert hospitality and pierce

Tamora's inset performance are in stark contrast to the slavish devotion to hegemony that characterize his actions in the early parts of the play.

The violence perpetrated against Titus and his family in the middle of the play demonstrates the distinction between the efficacy constructed by social ritual and its potential for constructing dramatic layers that result in stabilizing 'screens.' In Act II, Scene iii, of *Titus Andronicus*, Tamora and Aaron are able to successfully use the structures of the hunt to effect the isolation of Bassianus and Lavinia, as well as using that isolation and the forest's geography to incriminate Martius and Quintus. Here we see efficacy derived from ceremonial isolation instead of from the construction of dramatic layers. Bassianus refers to that isolation as he mocks Tamora for being caught in a compromising situation with Aaron, "Who have we here? Rome's royal empress / Unfurnished of her well-beseeming troop?" (2.3.55-56). Here we see a type of ceremonial efficacy that Tamora and Aaron have mastered, one centered on the social ritual's relationship to the liminal nature of the forest. Tamora's success in this particular set of plots, which rely on the obfuscation created by separation, does not carry over to success within the socially constructed bounds of the dramatic layers derived from other types of cultural performance. Aaron, on the other hand, has a degree of cultural proficiency that allows for his successful manipulation and interpretation of particular types of hospitality within the confines of Rome: specifically, his message that convinces Titus to cut off his hand in Act III, Scene i, and Aaron's ability to penetrate the implications of Titus' letter to Chiron and Demetrius in Act IV, Scene ii. In both of these specific examples as well as in his villainous self-awareness, Aaron displays a level of nuanced comprehension of Roman culture that separates him from the other antagonists

in *Titus* and still demonstrates an inability to exert any control over the social rituals that create dramatic layering. Instead he shows an impressive control of language, reference, and wordplay in addition to an innate ability to manipulate the basic expectations of hospitality. Palmer describes those expectations as follows: "[e]veryone from monarch to beggar participated in a logic of obligation and reciprocity that is both very old and absolutely current, a cultural pattern primarily studied by anthropologists whose scholarship suggests the universality of ritualistic welcome and care" (5). Aaron's authority in the dramatic narrative is predicated on the same sort of 'dissembling' that Tamora espouses to Saturninus along with his ability to interpret the character of others. Aaron sticks to this formula and because of this is relatively successful in his ability to use culture to generate non-hegemonic efficacy, but Tamora tries and fails to move beyond this type of manipulation.

In Act V, Scene ii, Tamora attempts to construct a quasi-inset play in order to convince Titus to stop Lucius from invading Rome with his army of Goths. To put it in Tarmora's words, she promises to "enchant the old Andronicus / With words more sweet and yet more dangerous / Than baits to fish or honey-stalks to sheep / Whenas the one is wounded with the bait, / The other rotted with delicious feed" (4.4.88-92). Her use of language that evokes both magic – "enchant" – and human mastery over the natural world – "baits to fish" and "rotted with delicious feed" – seems in stark contrast to the tactics she embraces, which are drawn from the same Senecan frame that *Spanish Tragedy* emulates. Tamora disguises herself as Revenge and attempts to shift a trope so closely associated with dramatic framing into the virtual world of the play in order to frame the banquet that she assumes will allow her to negate the threat posed by Lucius.

The failing in Tamora's logic is her assumption that she can manipulate and effectively improvise social ritual:

> Tamora — Whate'er I forge to feed his brainsick humours
> Do you uphold and maintain in your speeches,
> For now he firmly takes me for Revenge,
> And being credulous in this mad thought
> I'll make him send for Lucius his son,
> And whilst I at a banquet hold him sure
> I'll find some cunning practice out of hand
> To scatter and disperse the giddy Goths,
> Or at least make them his enemies.
> (5.2.71-79)

She intends to make her own type of 'metatheatre' that consists of an improvised, allegorical performance in the style of a masque. She speaks these lines while disguised as Revenge and in the middle of her conversation with Titus, all of which are contained within the performance that she envisions. She has lifted this scenario from a Senecan theatrical framing device, a discourse involving Revenge, in order to attempt to construct the sort of *meta-platea* that Hieronimo uses to act as an intermediary between the virtual audience of the *locus* and the ritual liminal space of the *meta-locus*, but she fails. Her role in the performance is meant to bridge between Titus, who is very much located in the primary world of the play or *locus*, and Tamora's two sons, disguised as Rape and Murder, who inhabit the layer of the inset performance or *meta-locus*. Unlike Hieronimo, who always has a preexisting 'argument,' exemplified by the book that appears in Act IV, Scene iv, of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Tamora relies on her aptitudes in the moment. She points to her ability to "forge" and to "find some cunning practice out of hand." Her lack of a concrete plan allows Titus to appropriate her plot. Jonathan Bate makes a similar point about Titus' appropriation of Tamora's plan, but he views it as a device that highlights the concept "that we are all role-players" (272). Instead, I would like to suggest that it highlights the importance of preexisting culturally defined structures to the

construction of dramatic layering and its corresponding efficacy. Titus, without Tamora's knowledge, effortlessly penetrates her ruse because she has confused disguise and deceit for theatricality. This type of confusion about authority and its relationship to cultural precedent is also at the heart of Titus' control over the banquet scene and the violence that it distances.

In Act V, Scene iii, of *Titus Andronicus*, Titus is able to use those customs of the guest/host relationship to construct what Palmer refers to as an "hospitable trap" (189). While Tamora appears to have planted the seed of this event in Titus' mind, "bid him come and banquet at thy house" (5.2.114), she also empowers Titus by placing him in the role of host. Instead of attempting to convince Titus to appear with Lucius at a banquet at the court where she could plan and orchestrate the scenario of which her appearance as Revenge is the first step, she relies on Titus' lunacy to allow her to manipulate the situation as it unfolds. But this is an error in judgment on Tamora's part, as Charles A. Hallett and Elaine S. Hallett point out, because "When Titus enters the highest stage of lunacy, his mind retains both its ability to handle logic and its ability to recognize evil" (82). I would say that Titus' perception of the world is not just retained; it is enhanced during his apparent madness during the final two acts of the play. The altered state of mind that Titus develops appears to divorce him from his confinement within the structures of Roman society and allows him to divorce hegemony from the cultural rituals that communicate it.

Titus' banquet returns the play to the structured ritual of accepted military practice that so strongly characterizes the first act of the play. The feast is not just a feast; it is a parley. Shakespeare ups the ceremonial ante in *Titus Andronicus* by taking a classic

Senecan convention, placing it clearly on stage, and then investing it with the conventions of a diplomatic negotiation.[10] Saturninus, Tamora, and Lucius are all entering into the banquet as the first step in potential talks that are to be witnessed both by the assembled Andronici as well as members of the army of Goths, various Tribunes, and Aemilius. Like Hieronimo in the climactic moments of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Titus operates a ceremonial framework in which his enemies are displayed publicly and forced to abide in a culturally prescribed manner. Saturninus and Tamora, due to their roles as guests as well as key members of the negotiation, are firmly located in the world of the inset cultural performance or *meta-locus*, along with Lucius. The assembled witnesses in the *locus* become a distinct, staged audience, and Titus, in his role as host, is able to mediate between those two more concrete dramatic layers by occupying the *meta-platea*. This social ritual becomes the catalyst for Titus' construction of a liminal space that, unlike in Kyd's play, grants only partial authority to Titus. Instead the feast suspends hegemony and allows for the most deserving and culturally proficient characters to rise to the top of the social order. Titus' banquet does not allow him to invert the social structure and take absolute control; in fact, he is undone by it. The ceremonial efficacy generated by dramatic layering in *Titus* is only able to temporarily repel the political forces of the *locus*; it is unable to create its own concrete social order. Because of this the banquet becomes a space of unstable contested authority in which private revenge is not only possible, but necessary for re-stabilizing the primary world of the play.

The stage directions in Act V, Scene iii, reinforce the public *meta-locus* that is created by the feast; the Emperor's entrance is accompanied by a "*Flourish*" that Lucius

[10] Seneca's *Thyestes* does not actually stage the banquet in which Thyestes eats his sons. The audience only views his realization of what he has done, not the act of consumption itself (84-93).

identifies as “trumpets” (5.3.15-16) and the beginning of the feast itself is accompanied by “*Hautboys*” (5.3.25-26) that Katherine Eisaman Maus identifies as “Oboes, used to provide music for ceremonial occasions” (430). And as the end of the act demonstrates, the scene recreates the representational logic of the first act; after the deaths of Lavinia, Tamora, Titus, and Saturninus, Lucius and Marcus both address the “people and sons of Rome” (5.3.66) from within the *meta-locus*, again pointing to the actual audience as stand-ins for the assembled Roman populace. The tribunes and Goths serve as the staged audience for the cultural performance in the *locus*, and after the bloodbath a number of the Roman members of that body, specifically Marcus and the Roman Lord, take on the roles of mediators in the *meta-platea* between the restaged ceremony of the *meta-locus* and both the staged audience and the actual audience.

The banquet itself becomes a place defined by its repetition of revenge. As Titus, while mediating in the *meta-platea*, says of the Emperor’s answer to his question about Virginius’ choice to slay his daughter, it is “A pattern, precedent, and lively warrant / For me, most wretched to perform the like” (5.3.43-44). All of Titus’ killings during the latter half of the play are predicated on narrative precedent: Virginius in the case of Lavinia, Ovid’s treatment of Philomel and Seneca’s *Thyestes* for Chiron and Demetrius, and both Seneca and *The Spanish Tragedy* for the killing of Tamora. It is this very repetition in *Titus Andronicus* as well as in *The Spanish Tragedy* that serves to stabilize the potential social subversion of personal revenge through a kind of cultural summary. To use Kerrigan’s words,

> In revenge tragedy, the point of maximum stylization is often the moment of repetition. It is also the phase of an action in which characters most behave like puppets. The shows and bloody banquet which end such works as *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* have a manipulative and recapitulative force which gives them a comic potential. (202)

Kerrigan's observation that Revenge Tragedy can create "comic potential" from "stylization" and "repetition" is certainly true, but the foundation of that latent comedy is distance constructed by the inherently repetitive nature of restaged cultural performance and the relationship between the dramatic layers it creates. The spectrum of representation that makes up the theatrical presentation of inset social ritual, which also relies on stylization and repetition, is what allows for the 'screening' effects that make the dark comedy, so often present in English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy, possible. The 'screens' that exist in these works are a direct result of each play's navigation of the juxtaposition of dramatic layers; they are constructed by the spaces between layers and are not necessarily housed within any given layer. The paradoxical effect of making private revenge appear more feasible and less possible at the same time, is reinforced both by the distance constructed through dramatic layering, and also by the inherently constructed nature of reference and repetition that particularly permeates *Titus Andronicus*.

Women Beware Women and the Spectacle of Violence

There are few Revenge Tragedies, even from the Jacobean era, that can compete with Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* for complexity of plot or the elaborate nature of its climactic multi-tiered reimagining of Kyd's revenge masque. But, unlike *The Spanish Tragedy*, which expends so much effort to contextualize its revenge within a politically stabilizing series of 'screening' devices, *Women Beware Women* embraces violence as the backbone of its aesthetic and concerns itself almost exclusively with using feasible impossibility to construct social critique. While that critique largely reinforces traditional patriarchal hegemony, it does so by embracing an almost absurd variation on

Kyd's 'screening' strategies. For Middleton, these layers of representation offer the opportunity to experiment with the Revenge genre itself. In *Women Beware Women* almost every character is converted in one way or another into a villain by the villainy of others and it is these moments of negative moral shift and their consequences that are offset by dramatic layering. In this case the 'screens' do not obscure the destabilizing violence, they frame and display that violence while exposing its sources and its futility. Middleton in this play celebrates and aestheticizes personal revenge, in addition to unrestrained sexuality, in order to foreground their associated risks and emphasize their pointlessness.

Women Beware Women in some ways embraces an even more traditionally Senecan plot structure than *The Spanish Tragedy* or *Titus Andronicus*, which Bowers refers to as the 'Villain Play' in which "Strong sensation is substituted for strong emotion, and artificial points of honor for an inherent moral code" (154). Although Bowers clearly laments the growing popularity of this subgenre in the first decade of the seventeenth century, it is an over-simplification to say that they completely lack an "inherent moral code." In this subset of Revenge plays, the protagonist, much like Atreus in Seneca's *Thyestes*, acts as the source, or one of the sources, of the injustices of the play, but unlike in *Thyestes* that villain almost always pays for that disruption of societal norms. While the protagonist in the 'Villain Play' is not the generally moral character placed into a moral conundrum, like Hieronimo, that protagonist does reinforce the importance of morals by means of their absence. The moral trickle-down effect that in many ways serves to mesh the various plots in *Women Beware Women* points to the potential risks posed by immoral behavior and it is the danger created by this spreading

miasma of wrath and lust that is exposed by restaged social ritual in the play. *Women Beware Women* embraces multiple types of social ritual including the performance of hospitality, the challenge that begins a duel, and most obviously its own 'metatheatrical' masque. And it is these various types of cultural performance that are at times played off one another in order to highlight the consequences of the ethical issues addressed by the play.

Women Beware Women, much like *Titus Andronicus*, uses hospitality to construct the type of liminal space that Hieronimo utilizes in *Spanish Tragedy*. Livia's social position, as an aristocratic widow, serves to allow her to master the boundary space constructed by entertaining in the same way that Hieronimo controls the space constructed by dramatic performance. Just as in *The Spanish Tragedy* that powerful liminal manipulation begins with an invitation to participate in social ritual, in this case Livia's invitation to her neighbor, Leantio's Mother, to visit her. Once the Mother arrives, and thus agrees to the expectations of the hospitality extended to her, Livia gains an impressive level of control over the situation that the play powerfully parallels with a game of chess played between the two women later in the scene. Just as Livia is able to command her pieces and out-maneuver her guest on the chessboard, she is equally manipulating the Mother's responsibility to protect her daughter-in-law from Livia's own ends. When the Mother attempts to use her duty to her son's wife, Bianca, to excuse herself from Livia's invitation, it creates the opening that allows Livia to trap Bianca for the Duke, who has been intoxicated by her beauty. Livia tells the Mother, "Now I beshrew you! / Could you be so unkind to her and me / To come and not bring her? Faith, 'tis not friendly" (2.2.213-215). Livia's ability, both because of her superior rank and that

granted by her role as hostess, allow her to shift responsibility in this sequence constantly from herself and to Leantio's Mother. The Mother has no reason to believe it would be appropriate to bring her daughter-in-law along; in fact, we are given the strong impression that while the Mother believes Livia to be friendly, she actually has little to no experience socializing with her, which is not surprising given her relative poverty. Livia only a few lines earlier chastises the Mother for not effectively inviting herself to Livia's home earlier solely on the grounds that they are neighbors (2.2.136-142). This strategy of using an abundance of hospitality to control the actions of her guests allows Livia to completely manipulate the other two women and their relation to her space. Just as Hieronimo constructs a dramatic *meta-locus* where he indoctrinates his victims while maintaining mastery, Livia places a set of social expectations on the Mother that force her to operate in a *meta-locus* constructed by hospitality, which consists of a set of rituals that she, primarily because of her class, does not truly understand. In both cases, the constructor of the *meta-locus* acts as a bridge for the victims; each explains the rules as they go along. This role that allows these ceremony builders to shift from the *locus* through the *meta-platea* to the *meta-locus* reinforces their mastery over the constructed ritual space and creates the doubleness or feasible impossibility that serves as the foundation of these sequences. It is this quality that allows the audience to believe that the Mother truly is unable to perceive that Bianca is being led beyond her protection into the arms of the Duke in just the same way that the King, Viceroy, and Castile are unable to realize that their sons are being murdered before their eyes.

In stark contrast to this, *Women Beware Women*'s final scene, the elaborate masque that leads to the death of six of the main characters in the play, has a very

different take on the cultural performance, which creates a *meta-locus*, that acts as a catalyst for the actions of a Revenge plot. In this case, instead of a single character that claims mastery over the liminal ritual space and is able to dictate the rules of that space, Middleton's play stages four different characters who attempt to master the *meta-locus* space: Guardiano, Livia, Isabella, and Bianca. The masque begins with an ante-masque in the *meta-platea*, which involves Hymen, Ganymede, and Hebe (none of whom is played by a named character) bringing wine to the guests of honor in the *locus*: the Duke, Bianca, and the Cardinal. Then the main action of the masque, which forms a *meta-locus*, stages the interaction between a young woman (played by Isabella) who is making an offering at the altar of Juno (played by Livia) so that the Goddess will help her decide between her two lovers (played by Guardiano and Hippolito). The attempted murders are organized as follows: Bianca has poisoned a cup of wine that is meant to be given to the Cardinal because he objects to her marriage to the Duke (who, it should be noted may or may not have raped her in Act II, Scene ii), but the wine cup is delivered to the wrong person and ends up poisoning the Duke, who dies at the end of the masque. Bianca, heart-broken by the Duke's death, poisons herself with the remains of his wine. Isabella bears with her on stage a censer of poisonous incense, which she places before Livia (who is playing Juno). This ploy succeeds and is in retaliation for Livia arranging for her to sleep with her uncle, Hippolito. Livia plans to kill both Hippolito and Isabella, since Hippolito, who is in love with his niece, Isabella, has killed Leantio, who was married to Bianca, and with whom Livia has become intimate. Livia succeeds in this by equipping the two cupids that accompany her with real bows and arrows, which dispatch Hippolitio, and by throwing "burning treasure" (5.1.155) into Isabella's lap. Guardiano's plot, which is

meant to punish Hippolito for abusing his ward, who intended to marry Isabella, involves setting up a trap door filled with caltrops that would be opened by the Ward when Guardiano stamped his foot. Unfortunately for Guardiano, Hippolito strikes the ground while Guardiano is standing over the trapdoor and he is dispatched by his own plan.

In the case of this beautifully elaborate bloodbath, we are given a different basis for the mastery over this cultural performance than we see in *The Spanish Tragedy*. The characters whose plans are successful, Livia and Isabella, are both women from the same aristocratic family, while Guardiano and Bianca are both characters whose fortunes have been elevated above their initial station. In effect, we are seeing the expression of mastery over the 'metatheatrical' *meta-locus* in this case as a form of 'cultural capital' that derives from a certain type of aristocratic upbringing. Just as Livia gains control over the Mother because of her mastery of hospitality, she and Isabella are able to use the masque as the catalyst for a revenge that in both cases beautifully illustrates a type of feasible impossibility. But, unlike Hieronimo, who uses his understanding of the theatrical to breach barriers imposed by political and socioeconomic power, Livia and Isabella use the knowledge granted by their privileged upbringing to circumvent patriarchal hegemony. In both cases, the cultural performance acts as the catalyst for a potentially disruptive and socially threatening form of revenge whose violence is made distant by the very dramatic layering that brings it into existence. Middleton is disrupting the political stabilization that permeates Shakespeare's and Kyd's uses of 'screening' devices. Instead of this spectrum of representation muting cultural critique, it becomes the vehicle for that criticism. In the case of Middleton's play, these structures emphasize the dangers posed to social order by women who are granted power by their social position. While Kyd goes

out of his way to use these strategies to avoid social critique, Middleton re-imagines them as a catalyst for a socially critical grotesque that relies on aestheticized violence to create a kind of tragic satire.

The Roman Actor and the Question of Dramatic Efficacy

Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* is, in many ways, a play that pushes the issues created by dramatic 'screens' to their logical conclusions. If we see plays like those written by Middleton as epitomizing a Jacobean style of Revenge Tragedy that uses restaged moments of culture as the catalyst for aestheticizing violence and also for potentially constructing cultural critique, then *The Roman Actor* is a play that constructs its own efficacy by undermining those assumptions. Jonathan Goldberg says of the play that "it reads at times as if it were an anthology of best-loved moments of Jacobean drama" (203) and Joanne Rochester astutely points out, "*The Roman Actor* is temporally a Caroline play, but its formal roots are deep in Jacobean soil" (16). But while most recent critics discuss the play's 'metatheatricality' in terms of *The Roman Actor*'s investment in defending the theatre against censorship, it seems difficult to ignore the influence of the Revenge Tragedy tradition and its relationship with restaged moments of culture. Though the issue of censorship is certainly central to Massinger's play,[11] it is the complex dramatic strategies that Massinger uses to engage with that issue that make *The Roman Actor* one of the most fascinating examples of the interaction between the use of social ritual and Revenge Tragedy on the early modern stage. Massinger's almost paradoxical strategy of questioning the very potential of dramatic efficacy within the world of the play serves as the foundation for constructing actual efficacy for his

[11] For more information on the critical discourse on *The Roman Actor* as an attack on theatrical censorship see Patterson, Reinheimer, and Rochester.

seventeenth-century audience. In other words, *The Roman Actor*'s apparent undermining of theatre's ability to create change by using 'metatheatre' to model its impotence, in turn allows for the play itself to have a concrete effect on its actual audience. The play creates theatrical efficacy through the illusion of its absence.

One of the central issues that repeatedly plagues readings of *The Roman Actor* is the tension set up between Paris' oration in defense of the stage and the way that the three plays-within-the-play actually function. To use Andrew James Hartley's words,

> In each of *The Roman Actor's* three (official) plays within the play, those watching are left utterly bewildered. Theater's power to instruct, though alive and well in Paris's defense rhetoric and Goldberg's critique, is pointedly absent from the actuality of the stage. (362)

Paris' defense of theatre, which Martin White describes as "a summary of contemporary attitudes to the stage, cast as a model of classical rhetoric" (26), relies, like the works it echoes, on Horace's *Ars Poetica* (*The Art of Poetry*) as one of its primary intellectual foundations. Hartley's reference to "theater's power to instruct" clearly invokes Horace's assertion that drama's aim is *utile dulce*, which is usually translated roughly as "'to delight' and 'to profit'" (Carlson 25). But Horace goes slightly further when clarifying this point in *The Art of Poetry*, saying that the Poet strives to create work that "can teach / And yet give pleasure" (80). Paris' speech certainly embraces this logic. He points to the depiction of glorious and heroic subject matter in a play as inciting that sort of behavior in its audience:

> Paris If done to life,
> As if they saw their dangers and their glories,
> And did partake with them in their rewards,
> All that have any spark of Roman in them, –
> The slothful arts laid by – contend to be
> Like those they see presented.
> (Massinger 1.3.90-95)

Paris gestures to some sort of inherent quality, "any spark of Roman," as what separates positive responses to these depictions from those who are unable to learn from them. But, Aretinus' attack on the theatre, to which Paris is responding, is in many ways predicated on the potential danger posed by theatre's power to teach or have efficacy. As Reinheimer describes it, "Aretinus's accusation is almost as predictable as the pattern of response: he grows outraged when a play seems to lampoon a particular individual and castigates the players for gratuitous abuse of their betters" (320). Paris, in his oration, responds to this critique by claiming that drama stages types and that if an individual's conscience responds to the staging of something that reminds them of their own faults, the culpability lies with that individual. But, in many ways, that assertion not only contradicts the possibility of theatrical efficacy but, as Rochester points out,[12] also Paris' own actions later in the play. In Act II, Scene i, when Paris discusses with Parthenius the staging of a play to help reform his father, the miser Philargus, Paris undermines his own earlier assertions:

> Paris Your father, looking on a covetous man
> Presented on stage as in a mirror,
> May see his own deformity and loathe it.
> (Massinger 2.1.96-99)

In effect, Paris is reinforcing Aretinus' point that the critique of characters that bear a resemblance to actual people is meant to show the error of that person's actions. Paris does appear to believe that theatre can instruct everyone, including those of higher classes. What's fascinating about this is that the play undermines Paris' position.

The three plays-within-the-play do not demonstrate the kind of instruction or efficacy that the rhetoric of the first act supports. The first of these restaged theatrical

[12] "Paris only makes this argument as defence against the libel charge: he cannot believe it himself or he would never offer to cure Philargus as confidently as he does" (Rochester 25).

performances, *The Cure of Avarice*, as noted above is performed with the intention that its message will serve to instruct Philargus and lead to his reformation, but the play seems to have absolutely no effect on him. Instead the audience views Philargus, in the *meta-platea*, give a running commentary on the *The Cure of Avarice* in the *meta-locus*, which highlights his sympathy for the miser depicted in the inset play that culminates in Philargus' response after the inset play's conclusion. The play-within-the-play of course ends with the miser character repenting his former stinginess and pledging to be more generous in the future, which does not suit Philargus.

> Philargus An old fool, to be gulled thus! Had he died
> As I resolve to do, not to be altered,
> It had gone off twanging.
> (Massinger 2.1.407-409)

The play in fact has so little of its intended effect on Philargus that it seems to reinforce his former state. He is so intractable on the subject that when Domitian, after the play, attempts to force Philargus to change his ways that the old man pleads to be allowed to live as he has, "Pray you give me leave / To die as I have lived. I must not part with / My gold. It is my life. I am past cure" (2.1.434-436). Domitian is so frustrated by the man's stubbornness that he has him executed. In fact, the only palpable efficacy of *The Cure of Avarice* is that Domitia, the Emperor's wife, becomes infatuated with Paris because of how well he performed. She is in fact so smitten with him that she immediately requests for him to perform again as a romantic lead. This first example of inset theatrical performance, though staged with a clear instructive efficacy in mind, not only completely fails to deliver the effect it intends by demonstrating its inability to deliver any transformation of Philargus, but also creates complications far beyond the intent of the players that formulated it.

The second play-within-the-play, *Iphis and Anaxarete*, complicates the issues developed in *The Cure of Avarice*. Unlike the first, this play seems to be staged without an express instructive purpose. *Iphis and Anaxarete* is a love story, centering on Iphis' unrequited passion for Anaxarete, which has been requested by the Empress for her entertainment, but it is quickly apparent that Domitia intends to live vicariously through the play's romantic plot. Just as Philargus comments during the performance of *The Cure of Avarice*, Domitia gives her own running feedback to Paris' interpretation of Iphis. Massinger again gives us a single virtual audience member who inhabits the *meta-platea* and through whose perspective the actual audience is invited to interpret the inset performance in the *meta-locus*. In this case the viewer is largely given Domitia's fawning responses to Paris and her frustration with every other performer that appears. As the spectacle proceeds, the Empress becomes more and more rapt by Paris' portrayal of Iphis so that when the character threatens to hang himself, she cries out, "Not for the world! / Restrain him, as you love your lives!" (3.2.282-283). Here we are given another case in point for dramatic efficacy. Massinger, after presenting an example of intended efficacy that both fails completely and has unintended results in the first play-within-the-play, creates an inset play that is presented by performers that do not intend any specific efficacy but, due to the existing mindset of an audience member, evokes an even stronger non-deliberate response. The lines that follow Domitia's outburst, particularly Domitian's response, reinforce this,

Caesar — Why are you
Transported thus, Domitia? 'Tis a play;
Or grant it serious, it at no part merits
This passion in you.

Paris — I ne'er purposed, madam,
To do this deed in earnest, though I bow
To your care and tenderness of me.

Domitia [*To Caesar*] Let me, sir,
Entreat your pardon. What I saw presented
Carried me beyond myself.
(Massinger 3.2.282-289)

Massinger appears to be using this dialogue to highlight the clear distinction between the performer's intended efficacy, the performance's effect on a relatively normal audience member, and the contrasting response from an emotionally invested viewer. Paris, in response to Domitia, immediately claims that he never intended to do actual harm to himself and implies that the performers did not mean to communicate the possibility for the violence perpetrated in the *meta-locus* to have actual consequences in the *locus*. This is backed up by Domitian, who, though he grants that the performance should be taken seriously, is not "transported" by the spectacle and sees no explanation in the performance for Domitia's "passion." She, on the other hand, initially places all responsibility for her response on the inset play that "carried [her] beyond [her]self." A few lines later she appears to revise this position when she claims to feel unwell, although her behavior is odd enough to draw suspicion from Aretinus (3.2.290-295). Massinger's presentation of *Iphis and Anaxarete* not only reinforces the ineffectiveness of intentional dramatic efficacy that is demonstrated by *The Cure of Avarice*, but also points more explicitly to the inconsistent nature of any theatrical effect. In both of the first two play-within-the-play moments Domitia's responses differ sharply from other members of the audience. Her passion serves as a case in point for the futility of the instructive Horacian model for drama. Paradoxically, Massinger's play seems to be intentionally influencing its viewer to believe that plays are incapable of intentionally influencing their audience.

The last of the inset plays, *The False Servant*, takes the concept of theatre's inability to construct efficacy to an even more extreme level. Unlike *The Spanish*

Tragedy and *Women Beware Women* that both use play-within-the-play moments to construct a liminal space that allows for marginalized individuals to gain control over those who wield social authority, *The Roman Actor* in this final restaged theatrical moment gives us the exact opposite. Domitian orders Paris and his company to perform *The False Servant* after the actor is discovered kissing Domitia who has been "*Courting Paris wantonly*" (4.2.108-109). The inset play stages an almost identical scenario with Paris playing the servant who has been seduced by his mistress and Domitian taking on the role of the wronged lord who catches them *in flagrante delicto*. Paris and the boy who performs the wife perform the play in keeping with the two earlier examples, but when Domitian enters, his lack of competence is conspicuous:

Aesopus [*To Caesar*]		Now, sir, now.
Caesar	I must take them at it?	
Aesopus		Yes, sir, be but perfect.
Caesar	*Oh, villain! Thankless villain!* – I should talk now, But I have forgot my part. But I can do: Thus, thus, and thus!	
		Kills Paris
Paris		Oh! I am slain in earnest.
Caesar	'Tis true, and 'twas my purpose, my good Paris.	
		(Massinger 4.2.279-284)

While Hieronimo is able to use his masterful staging of a play to circumvent authority and the various revengers in *Women Beware Women* create an elaborate spectacle of violence with their inset masque, Domitian does neither although he claims he has used this method to kill Paris in order to honor him, saying, "'twas my study / To make thy [Paris'] end more glorious" (Massinger 4.2.290-291). But, Domitian appears to be the only character in *The Roman Actor* who sees Paris' manner of death as "glorious," and even Domitian, according to Parthenius, appears to rather quickly regret killing Paris

(Massinger 5.1.9-10). *The False Servant* has none of the dramatic efficacy that Domitian intends; instead, the violence he perpetrates has the only lasting effect. The Emperor's actions are not made grand by his incompetent performance nor is Paris' impressive acting enough to make his death meaningful.

While many other critics have noticed the clear absence of efficacy in *The Roman Actor*'s three inset plays, they have generally found ways of reading that impotence as symptomatic of something other than the play making a statement about drama's general inability to instruct. Reinheimer, on the other hand, sees the loss of efficacy as a byproduct of censorship itself.

> Massinger presents popular censorship in three inset plays, performances which have also been "contracted" (III.ii.133), or in other words censored by either Domitian or Domitia. Though the exact combination of popular and state censorship differs in each exemplum, the result is invariably the same: censorship cancels any didactic efforts on the part of the play. (Reinheimer 322-323)

The difficulty with Reinheimer's reading is that based on his logic all play-within-the-play moments are effectively censored, since all of them are "contracted." Hieronimo's version of *Soliman and Perseda*, of which Kyd wrote a full-length version, only lasts for approximately 56 lines with no loss of efficacy, while Paris' *The Cure of Avarice* lasts a comparatively long 119 lines. The shortening of inset plays is a central component of effectively all play-within-the-play structures and *The Roman Actor* never provides the viewer an example of what an efficacious performance would look like, instead giving the audience copious examples of drama's inability to instruct.

Rochester points to Massinger as espousing "drama as dialogue, a process he only partially controls, and this is why he insists his audience take their role seriously" (50). The difficulty with this reading is that it is predicated on the theatricality of one of the few truly efficacious moments of cultural performance in the *The Roman Actor*, the

torture of Sura and Rusticus in Act III, Scene ii. The torture is certainly a spectacle, but it differs from the inset plays because of the manner in which its dramatic layering functions. Almost all of the play-within-the-play devices that appear in early modern English drama form a completely new layer of representation, a *meta-locus*, which then places the staged audience in either the *locus* or *meta-platea*.[13] The torture sequence, like many restaged social rituals that do not emphasize a set of staged spectators, sets up the actual audience as the public viewers of the spectacle of punishment and places that spectacle firmly in the *locus*. Aretinus goes so far as to tell the guards to "carefully observe / The people's looks" (3.2.47-48) for possible sedition and since the stage direction makes no overt reference to an onstage crowd, it seems reasonable to assume he is gesturing to the actual audience. Because of this subtle difference the audience is not watching a staged audience in the *locus* watch a restaged performance in the *meta-locus* but is instead watching a staged spectacle in the *locus* mediated by Domitian's commentary in the *platea*. Domitian, Parthenius, and Aretinus' involvement in the formulation and execution of the specatacle marks them as participants in the social ritual, which forces the viewer to see them as existing in a mediating layer instead of existing as a virtual audience. Instead of embracing this public spectacle as an example of successful theatrical efficacy, Massinger is placing this moment of instructive ritualized resistance in stark contrast to the ineffectiveness of Paris' dramatic performances. In fact, it is Sura and Rusticus' lack of theatricality, as Rochester observes (35), that generates efficacy. Domitian and Parthenius are overcome by the cruelty of torture with which they are complicit, because of the two senators' Stoic restraint – as Rusticus puts it, "our calm

[13] There are a few exceptions, most notably *Fulgens and Lucres* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, but in the few cases I have encountered their relationship to theatrical performance is extremely overt.

patience treading / Upon the neck of tyranny" (3.2.95-96). The effect is so powerful that Domitian, who has clearly viewed many theatrical performances, states, "I was never / O'ercome till now" (3.2.83-84). While the play certainly highlights the connection between theatre and politics, it does so by emphasizing the political futility of theatre, not the "absolute continuity" between them to which Goldberg points (203).

Unlike the other three plays discussed above, *The Roman Actor* does not conclude with the construction of dramatic layers that result in the formation of liminal space. Instead, in keeping with its undermining of intentional theatrical efficacy, Massinger uses a manipulation of hospitality similar to Aaron's exploitation of his role as messenger. In the play's final scene, Parthenius delivers a false message to Domitian to separate him from his retinue and to allow Parthenius and his fellow conspirators to stab the tyrant to death, all of which occurs in the *locus*. Although this conclusion still relies on a social ritual as a catalyst for its violent climax, the lack of dramatic distance keeps the moment from developing the sort of feasible impossibility seen in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Women Beware Women*. Instead the play's potentially destabilizing critique of authoritarian rule is merely mitigated by the impotence of its 'metatheatrical' moments. Massinger in effect argues for the inability of theatre to construct efficacy as a defense against the danger inherent in the play's explicit resistance.

The Roman Actor, along with *Women Beware Women*, demonstrates the outcome of Revenge Tragedy's shift from a potentially dangerous genre in the late sixteenth century to an increasingly socially critical and dramatically complex medium by the mid-Jacobean era, extending into the reign of Charles I. This shift is not a rapid one and is predicated on the genre's complex development, both politically and dramaturgically,

over the first decade of the seventeenth century. Plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, and *Antonio's Revenge*, just to name a few, each find new ways to reinvent Kyd's use of dramatic layering while making, through repetition, the potential ramification of its subject matter less immediate. The feasible impossibility so central to the stabilizing strategies of *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Titus Andronicus* almost becomes second nature for the genre, while the use of cultural performance, and its resulting dramatic layers, act as a catalyst for transcending socially constructed impossibility, which in turn transition into aestheticized spectacles of violence.

CHAPTER 2

EMBRACING THE "MONGREL:" JOHN MARSTON'S *THE MALCONTENT*, *ANTONIO AND MELLIDA*, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH EARLY MODERN TRAGICOMEDY

Formal experimentation with the restaging of cultural performance is not limited to Revenge Tragedy as a genre. While the plays discussed in Chapter 1 are certainly important to the development of these dramaturgical devices, other genres quickly begin to explore the same reflexive tropes. John Marston's forays into Tragicomedy demonstrate the cross-pollination of these theatrical innovations from Revenge Tragedy into other genres. By building on the foundations laid by Kyd and Shakespeare, Marston embraces the developments found in Elizabethan Revenge plays while redefining the potential efficacy of restaged cultural performance. Unlike many of the aforementioned Revenge Tragedies, in which dramatic layering allows for the construction of liminal space that serves as a catalyst for a permanent resolution of the plot, Marston's approach to Tragicomedy uses those same dramatic structures to question the permanence of the traditional tragicomic resolution.

In part because of this, John Marston's tragicomic works have become a troublesome exception to the prevailing critical understanding of the genre. Nonetheless, Marston's position within the history of English Tragicomedy makes him difficult to omit from our discussion of late Elizabethan and Jacobean interpretations of the genre, despite the fact that his work largely defies the critically accepted trajectory of Tragicomedy's development in the period. While *The Malcontent* is the first English play identified in print as a Tragicomedy,[14] it is by no means the same variety of Tragicomedy that John

[14] Based on its 1604 entry in the Stationer's Register. See also Lawrence.

Fletcher would make popular only a few years later. Nor is it the type that has interested so many recent scholars. Instead, many current studies of the genre either marginalize or ignore Marston's contribution to Tragicomedy, while the critical pieces that do address Marston's work tend to apply the same Guarinian model that Fletcher's *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* and its highly theoretical introduction, "To the Reader," so directly engage. These discussions of Marston's influence on the genre point to a teleological bias in the existing critical conversation regarding Tragicomedy that leads to Marston's work being forced into a framework that overlooks much of the originality of his tragicomic drama. While there is a direct progression from Italianate pastoral Tragicomedy to the 'unified' Tragicomedies that become popular in England during the latter half of the first decade of the seventeenth century, that is not the only form of Tragicomedy presented on the early modern London stage. Those plays that either experiment with or self-identify as participating in the genre but that are not part of that direct progression are either seen as marginal or co-opted into the existing trajectory by the current critical discourse. The strong influence of the Italianate tragicomic tradition on the English stage should not lead modern readers to assume that there is only one model for Tragicomedy. Marston's Tragicomedies put forth a more distinctly English version of the genre, which emphasizes incompleteness within a constantly shifting structure that blends the vicious tone of Senecan tragedy with the unrestrained comedy to which Guarini objects. This type of Tragicomedy, in turn, bears more of a resemblance to the late sixteenth-century English

dramatic Romances that Philip Sidney calls "mongrel" than to the 'unified' Italianate tragicomic tradition.[15]

The standard narrative of Tragicomedy's growth into one of the more popular dramatic genres of Jacobean England is rooted in the clear connection between the works of the Italian playwright and theorist Giambattista Guarini and those of John Fletcher. Guarini's best-known work, a pastoral Tragicomedy called *Il pastor fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd* [1590]), was one of the most successful and most controversial works of printed drama, both domestically and internationally, of the late sixteenth century. Guarini responded to this criticism, which was largely centered on the play's blended genre, in his 1599 treatise, *Compedio Della Poesia Tragicomica* (*The Compendium of Tragicomic Poetry*), in which he outlines a series of justifications for Tragicomedy's inherent 'unity.' As R. A. Foakes describes Guarini's position, "[t]ragicomedy, in other words, is controlled by a comic order and is, in effect, a subspecies of comedy" (74). Guarini describes generic blending as something that is rooted in the plot's execution, and not as something that results from a merging of dissimilar plots:

> Since it deals with great persons and heroes, humble diction is unfitting, and since it is not concerned with the terrible and the horrible, but rather avoids it, it abandons the grave and employs the sweet, which modifies the greatness and sublimity that is proper to pure tragedy. (Guarini 525)

This abandonment of the grave and avoidance of the horrible, as well as Guarini's position that both death and vulgarity are to be avoided at all cost, are mirrored by Fletcher. In his "To the Reader," which appears in the front matter of his *The Faithfull Shepheardesse* (1610), Fletcher states, "[a] tragic-comedie is not so called in respect of

[15] Sidney famously attacks Tragicomedy, calling it "mongrel" in his *Defence of Poesy*, " . . . all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither the admiration and commiseration nor the right sportfulness is by their mongrel tragicomedy obtained" (46).

mirth and killing but in respect it wants deaths, which is inough to make it no tragedie, yet brings some neere it, which is inough to make it no comedie" (4). Both Guarini and Fletcher reject the notion that a Tragicomedy is built around two meshed plots; it is instead a play that achieves a comic resolution, while flirting with the tone, trajectory, and grandeur of tragedy.[16] Their clearly defined and defended position is understandably attractive as a working definition of the genre in the period, so much so that Michael Neill has observed that from a modern perspective "To the Reader" "has come to read like a manifesto" ("Turn and Counterturn"155). But, as this chapter will demonstrate, modern discussions of Tragicomedy, which are heavily invested in this Italianate tragicomic tradition, largely disparage and ignore playwrights like Marston who actively experiment with alternate approaches to the genre in much the same way that Tragicomedy has largely been disparaged and ignored historically. That is not to say that Marston was not influenced by Guarini: Marston's plays certainly contain direct references to Guarini's work, but Marston's plays also directly undermine the unity and decorum that Guarini saw as central to the genre. Much of the Guarinian material that we see in Marston's tragicomic work is used as a source for humor and not as a blueprint for the genre's form.

The discussion of *The Malcontent* in critical works on Tragicomedy demonstrates how Marston's work has largely been either critically appropriated or marginalized. G. K. Hunter as well as Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope describe the play as participating in a distinctly non-Italian version of the genre, but these critics, as well as

[16] For further discussion of the connections between Guarini's and Fletcher's theoretical discussions of Tragicomedy see Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope's "Introduction: The Politics of Tragicomedy, 1610-50" in *The Politics of Tragicomedy* and Jane Hwang Degenhardt's "Turning Miscegenation into Tragicomedy (Or Not): Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso*" in *Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage*.

those who have written on the play itself, paradoxically focus on its interactions with those Italian models. Jason Lawrence's reading of *The Malcontent*, for example, views the play's link to *Il pastor fido* as necessary for its inclusion in the discussion of Tragicomedy (155), while Hunter sees *The Malcontent*'s importance rooted in Marston's critique of Guarini (134).[17] Though the critical discourse clearly acknowledges that Marston's exploration of the genre differs from his Italian predecessors or English peers, those differences are seen as secondary to Marston's engagement with Guarini's work. While McMullan and Hope do admit *The Malcontent* is important because of its position as a non-pastoral Tragicomedy and thus as an obvious example of a play that does not fit Fletcher's definition of Tragicomedy in "To The Reader," their motivation for this move is to allow them to open up the discussion of the genre beyond Fletcher's viewpoint into a critical space in which Marston's work is not given further consideration.[18] Lucy Munro discusses *The Malcontent*'s relationship to Tragicomedy in significant detail, and though she recognizes that the play breeches Guarinian decorum, she goes to great lengths to reinforce Marston's use of Guarinian tropes: "Above all, [*The Malcontent*] develops a tragicomic aesthetic which is in many respects congruent with Guarini's" (107). Munro does point to a number of other sources with which Marston engaged, specifically John Lyly and several Revenge Tragedies (including *Antonio's Revenge*), but her argument continually returns to the alleged centrality of the logic of Italianate Tragicomedy in *The*

[17] Keith Sturgess makes a similar move regarding *Antonio and Mellida*, "The play [*Antonio and Mellida*], anticipating the construction of Fletcherian tragicomedy, lacks death though it brings some close to death. At the last, and risking more than a little the charge of implausibility, a tongue-in-cheek, happy ending is contrived" (xvi). Sturgess never actually calls Marston's play a Tragicomedy, thus its only importance to that discourse is a sort of rough draft that predicts Fletcher.

[18] See McMullan and Hope (5-7).

Malcontent.[19] A number of other discussions of Tragicomedy as a genre, such as Nancy Klein Maguire's *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics* and Valerie Forman's *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage*, do not mention Marston or *The Malcontent* at all.[20] In all of these cases it becomes clear that the critical conversation is far more interested in observing the progression of the genre as it grows in popularity during the first couple of decades of the Jacobean period, instead of trying to uncover the complex roots that influenced the development of the genre on the English stage.

Marston's generic experimentation should be seen less as an outlier and more as an indicator that the current critical discourse needs to question its assumptions about how Tragicomedy was understood by English Renaissance playwrights. As this chapter will argue, Tragicomedy for Marston was a genre that by its very nature invited innovation. Instead of activating generic models that other playwrights had used to stabilize the discursive potential of the genre, his tragicomic work engages directly with that instability. Marston's exploration of the genre's "mongrel" nature serves to embrace its inconsistencies, not to resolve them. This is most clearly demonstrated in the ways that his work undercuts Aristotelian conceptions of genre, in particular questioning their emphasis on final resolution as a generic marker, and by extension their preoccupation with unity and completeness.

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[19] See Munro (107-111).

[20] It should be noted that Verna Foster's treatment of *The Malcontent* in *The Name and Nature of Tragicomedy* is a notable exception to this trend. While she only discusses the play briefly, she does point to it as both highly original [primarily because of its tragic character and the play's "darkly ironic tone" (50)] and distinctly tragicomic (47-50).

In this chapter I offer an alternate approach to *The Malcontent* by comparing its engagement with Tragicomedy to that of one of Marston's earliest works, *The History of Antonio and Mellida* (1599). While the latter play does not self-identify as a Tragicomedy, it directly engages with many of the accepted conventions of the genre. In particular, it contains a plot with clear tragic potential, which threatens the life of the play's more heroic characters but has an apparently comic resolution that involves the revelation that one of the main characters is not, in fact, dead. In addition, the play utilizes many of the same dramatic strategies found in *The Malcontent*, including the 'metatheatrical' satire of dramatic convention and the generic blending around which that play is also constructed. *Antonio and Mellida* appeared on the London theatre scene in 1599 at the very threshold of Tragicomedy's ascension as a popular form in England. The next decade would see the first English translation of Guarini's *Il pastor fido* as well as the production of many works that have become central to the critical discussion of Tragicomedy's evolution on the English stage.[21] But modern critics have not seen *Antonio and Mellida* as important to that conversation. Instead the play has largely been criticized as a generic "mongrel." As Samuel Schoenbaum puts it, "The fundamental incongruity [in *Antonio and Mellida*] lies, however, in the peculiar fusion of romantic melodrama with satirical comedy" (1070). The non-pejorative work that has been written on the play focuses on its satirical qualities, particularly its portrayal of the standard tropes of conventional comic love plots, its unique induction, and its relationship to its

[21] Marston's *The Malcontent* (1603), Samuel Daniel's *The Queen's Arcadia* (1605), Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* (1609), John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1610), Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1603), *Pericles* (1608), and *Cymbeline* (1609) just to name a few.

sequel, *Antonio's Revenge* (1601), which is a brutal but also satirical Revenge Tragedy.[22] While these issues are certainly central to understanding *Antonio and Mellida*, so too is the play's relationship to tragicomic form, and in some ways it is this relationship that has kept the play from receiving the critical attention it deserves. Marston's particular approach to constructing Tragicomedy, as it manifests in *Antonio and Mellida* and *The Malcontent*, resists Guarini's neo-classical justifications for genre blending, which are structured around decorum and a unity of purpose or effect. Marston instead builds two Tragicomedies that embrace their "mongrel" roots. His exploration of the genre is, in effect, an early attempt to undermine Aristotelian convention, not through farce, but by constructing works that function dramatically while defying generic unity.

In particular, Marston's tragicomic experimentation seems to predict Jacobean interest in the theatrical potential of reflexive self-awareness, both within and beyond the genre. This is most clearly displayed in both *The Malcontent* and *Antonio and Mellida* by Marston's experimentation with the possible dramatic ramifications of staging moments of marked social ritual or cultural performance, in particular during the climax of the plays' respective dramatic actions. These restaged marked events are part of a larger strategy involving the utilization of genre-specific tropes to create generic instability, a strategy which allows Marston to construct Tragicomedies that reject the 'unified' qualities that Guarini and Fletcher see as central to the genre. Each play uses the restaged stock performances of the court space to construct a distinctive *meta-locus* within its climactic scene that both allows for intimate interaction in the resulting *meta-platea* and

[22] See Waith's *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher*, Foakes' *Tragicomedy and Comic Form*, Schoenbaum's *The Precarious Balance of John Marston*, and Bergson's *Dramatic Style as Parody in Marston's Antonio and Mellida*.

creates the appearance of efficacy in the *locus*.[23] The groundwork for these experimental resolutions is set up by each play's complex navigation of generic markers, which serves to disrupt genre identification and unity. Through the obfuscation of genre, these plays question the very foundation of Aristotelian generic distinctions by casting doubt on the assumed permanence of each plot's comic resolution. Instead of relying on a miraculous comic reversal to achieve resolution, these plays gesture to future, potential events beyond the action of the plays themselves – events that would be necessary for those plots to create closure. Violence and Revenge Tragedy logic, which the protagonists seem to avoid by using virtual moments of social ritual, appear to be necessary, in the end, for each narrative to achieve a stable conclusion. When seen through the lens of Marston's generally reflexive approach and his use of staged moments of cultural expression, this manipulation of each plot's potential violence results in these plays exhibiting two distinct characteristics that are not traditionally associated with Tragicomedy – incompleteness and suspense.

Marston, Tragicomedy, and the Existing Conversation

The existing critical discussion of *Antonio and Mellida* has resisted viewing the generic experimentation in the play as pertinent to the development of Tragicomedy. As mentioned earlier, the play is almost universally criticized in those sporadic treatments by modern readers for the very lack of unity that makes the play's treatment of genre so complex. Schoenbaum goes so far as to use *Antonio and Mellida* as the primary example of what he calls "the essential incongruity of Marston's work" (1070), which for Schoenbaum is characterized by certain qualities of Marston's writing: "At times the

[23] For more information about dramatic layering and the language this project is using to discuss it see the Introduction (10-12).

dramatist [Marston] is inarticulate, occasionally he is incoherent, and quite frequently he is hysterical" (1070). But Schoenbaum does begin to use language reminiscent of tragicomic tropes: "The romantic elements in the plot are further obscured by a whole gallery of eccentrics" and "The duality of the author's attitude can be seen even in the characterization of the villain of the piece" (1071). Bergson takes a more accepting view of this duality, which he describes as the "juxtaposition of tragic and comic elements" (308). But, while he defends the generic experimentation of the play, he never labels *Antonio and Mellida* as anything but "a darkening of romantic comedy" (309) whose purpose is, along with its sequel, to complete "a kind of dramaturgical critique of the comic and tragic world-views" (309).

Though it is true that both Schoenbaum and Bergson's readings are certainly dated by academic standards, having been published in 1952 and 1971, respectively, they do seem to be representative of an approach to Marston's work that is still prevalent and has trouble fitting him into a standard narrative of the growth of Tragicomedy in early modern England. Even *The Malcontent*, Marston's most obviously tragicomic work, has to some degree been marginalized in more recent discussion of Tragicomedy. Ristine, who is admittedly also a relatively dated critic, in his discussion of Tragicomedy's development from 1600 to 1610, describes Marston's contribution in the following terms: "Considered individually, the 'Malcontent' is certainly a tragicomedy of remarkable construction and power, but not of the kind destined soon to absorb the attention of Jacobean playwrights" (99). Cohen, in his discussion of the trajectory of English Tragicomedy, breaks the progression of the genre into three phases: plays of the late sixteenth century with a structure derived from medieval drama, "the mixed tragicomedy

of the opening years of the seventeenth century composed primarily by Marston and Shakespeare" (126), and the "more unified tragicomedy" (126) that arises at the end of the first decade of the 1600s, which is characterized by its debt to "Italian neo-classical theory and practice" (126). While this point alone does not marginalize Marston's work, the fact that this is the only point in the essay in which Marston or his work is mentioned, while Shakespeare figures prominently, points to Marston's work in the genre as interesting only in the context of other playwrights. Other more recent discussions of Tragicomedy as a genre, like Maguire's *Renaissance Tragicomedy: Explorations in Genre and Politics* and Forman's *Tragicomic Redemptions: Global Economics and the Early Modern English Stage*, do not mention Marston or *The Malcontent* at all.

This marginalization of Marston's contribution to the genre indicates the presence of the teleological bias that permeates the existing critical conversation regarding Tragicomedy. Marston's Tragicomedies, since they do not exemplify the progression from Italianate pastoral Tragicomedy to the 'unified' English Tragicomedies of Fletcher, are regarded as insignificant. As cited above, both Hunter and Lawrence attempt to resolve Marston's aberrant position outside of this trajectory by focusing on *The Malcontent*'s engagement with Guarini. They clearly see Marston as significant, but instead of questioning the standard model of the genre's progression, they try to justify his inclusion in it. This rigid understanding of the genre's trajectory may owe its longevity to the man who is perhaps Tragicomedy's most venerable English critic: Sir Philip Sidney. Sidney's vehement attacks on late sixteenth-century Tragicomedy in *The Defence of Poesy* (written circa 1580 and published in 1595) are echoed by many of the twentieth and twenty-first-century critics I have been discussing. Statements like

"Disconcerting as it is unexpected" (Schoenbaum 1070), "abrupt, discontinuous" (Bergson 307), and "the absurdity of their 'Babel of tongues'" (Foakes 77) seem strangely reminiscent of some of Sidney's best lines about Tragicomedy: "these gross absurdities," "with neither decency nor discretion," "some extreme show of doltishness" (46-47). Current critics, in large part, appear to justify at least subconsciously Tragicomedy's importance through the critical model developed by Guarini and later partially adopted by playwrights like Beaumont and Fletcher. In other words, Guarini seems to be able to refine the "mongrel" for more recent critics and turn it into an acceptable breed unto itself.

This refinement appears to be rooted in Guarini's preoccupation with 'unity.' It should be noted that this is not literally the same sort of unity seen in foundational neo-classical concepts like unity of time, place, and action. Guarini's interest in 'unity,' though, is almost certainly rooted in the same neo-classical mindset that values those formal limitations. This is clearly evident in his defense of the tragicomic form on the grounds of its ability to create formal singularity from generic hybridity.

> Art observes that tragedy and comedy are composed of heterogeneous parts, and that therefore if an entire tragedy and an entire comedy should be mixed, they would not be able to function properly together as in a natural mixture, because they do not have a single intrinsic principle, . . . But art, a most prudent imitator of nature, plays the part of the intrinsic principle, and while nature alters the parts after they are united, art alters them before they are joined in order that they may be able to exist together and, though mixed, produce a single form. (Guarini 512)

As this passage indicates, Guarini is defending the tragicomic experiment on the grounds that art's ability to imitate nature acts as a guiding principle that in turn is able to unify seemingly unrelated tragic and comic elements. This concept of imitation, which for Guarini is almost certainly related to Aristotelian mimesis, becomes the organizing

principle on which the Tragicomedy is built. This is made particularly clear in Guarini's most definitional statement about the genre.

> But to conclude once for all that which it was my first intention to show, I say that to a question on the end of tragicomedy I shall answer that it is to imitate with the resources of the stage an action that is feigned and in which are mingled all the tragic and comic parts that can coexist in verisimilitude and decorum, properly arranged in a single dramatic form, with the end of purging with pleasure the sadness of the hearers.
> (Guarini 524)

The tragic and the comic are no longer genres; they are 'parts' that serve to build toward a unified catharsis. Dramatic 'unity' comes from a cohesive dramatic arc that is able to elicit the catharsis that is central to an Aristotelian conception of drama. Guarini's argument refines the sort of 'mashed up' quality that is so often associated with Tragicomedy, and the fact that modern critics are drawn to it is to some degree understandable, if one wants both to appreciate the tragicomic genre and to make that appreciation fit into an aesthetic model that values Sidney. This particularly makes sense given that Sidney could not have read Guarini's *Compedio Della Poesia Tragicomica* (1599) before writing *The Defence of Poesy* and that it is distinctly possible that Sidney could have agreed with Guarini's argument, considering its strongly Aristotelian tone and Guarini's obvious interest in concepts like 'unity,' which is at the very heart of Sidney's critique of genre blending. This said, it is my contention that Marston was attempting to develop a unique non-Italianate approach to Tragicomedy in 1599, before Guarini's *Il pastor fido* had been translated into English. While it is possible that Marston may have read Guarini's play in Italian before writing *Antonio and Mellida*,[24] it is more important to my assertion that Marston would probably have been at least slightly aware of the

[24] According to Hunter, *Il pastor fido* was available in the original Italian in England from as early as 1591 (126). While I do not wish to assert that Marston was fluent in Italian, it does seem likely that he had at least a passing knowledge of the language, which is demonstrated in the Italian dialogue that appears in *Antonio and Mellida* (4.1.181-198) and made even more likely given that his mother was "a second generation Italian immigrant" (Sturgess vii).

growing fad for Tragicomedy in Italy and of Sidney's attack on the genre in *The Defence of Poesy*. Marston, at the time a young playwright just beginning his career, was attempting to write a play that would benefit from what he may have seen as 'the next big thing' by carving out a unique approach to a type of play that he would almost certainly have seen, like Sidney, as marked by genre blending. This results in *Antonio and Mellida* not only being extraordinarily theatrically self-aware, but also in the play using that self-awareness to construct an unpredictable and at some level suspenseful plot, which is unique to Marston's take on the genre.

A Starting Point: *Antonio and Mellida* in Perspective

Antonio and Mellida was quite possibly Marston's first foray into writing for the theatre, as well as a probable candidate for the first play staged by the newly re-formed Paul's Boys in 1599.[25] Building on the precedent set by a number of late-sixteenth-century Romance plays like Robert Greene's *The Historie of Orlando Furioso* (printed 1594) and the anonymous *Mucedorus* (printed 1598), Marston's play embeds a plot that resembles those found in the Italianate tragicomic tradition within a framework that is

[25] Both *Antonio and Mellida* and Marston's play *Histriomastix* are believed to have been performed around 1599 by Paul's Boys (Sturgess xxxiii), but Andrew Gurr asserts that *Antonio and Mellida* is "a piece strikingly self conscious about its venue and presentation, as if it was their [Paul's Boys] first venture into the openly commercial playing world" (51). I am inclined to agree.

hyperaware of its own generic expectations.[26] The plot itself, which reads like many seventeenth-century Tragicomedies, revolves around Antonio, who is the son of Andrugio, the Duke of Genoa. When the play begins, the Venetian navy has defeated Genoa's fleet, which results in Venice's effective conquest of Genoa. The Duke of Venice, Piero, orders that a reward be given to any man who will bring him the head of Andrugio, who is forced into hiding. Antonio, however, disguises himself as an Amazon in order to gain access to Piero's court. Driven by his love for Piero's daughter, Mellida, Antonio reveals his true identity to her and they flee the Venetian court. During the process of the escape, Mellida disguises herself as a page and the two lovers happen to meet up with Andrugio in the wilderness. This happy reunion is quickly broken up when

[26] Both of these plays draw their plot lines from extended non-dramatic Romances (Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Sidney's *Arcadia*, respectively), but both also directly engage how those plots interact with dramatic genre. Greene goes so far as to completely alter the heart of Orlando's story in Ariosto's treatment by making his love's lack of fidelity a malicious rumor instead of an actual event. This allows Greene to transform the Orlando plot into one that involves a traditional comic resolution that seems to have been associated with stage Romances, while playing with the expectations of anyone in his audience who had read Ariosto's original. *Mucedorus*, on the other hand, very directly engages generic concerns in its induction, which literally stages the personification of Comedy as she struggles against Envy, who clearly represents tragedy, as he attempts to co-opt her play. Interestingly enough Comedy and Envy make some intriguing comments that speak to the way the play, at least, conceives these genres. Envy, who is portrayed in the stage direction as "besmeared with blood" (induction ln. 7-8), is described by Comedy as a "bloody, envious disdainer of men's joys, / Whose name is fraught with bloody stratagems, / Delights in nothing but in spoil and death," (induction ln. 41-43). Envy, on the other hand, describes Comedy while deriding her, "What, all on mirth?" (Induction ln. 9). In these passages, *Mucedorus*' author is directly engaging in the sort of generic distinctions that bothered Sidney; one might call it a "hornpipes and funerals" (Sidney 47) model of genre. Comedy continues the induction by requesting that Envy "mix not death 'mongst pleasing comedies" (ln. 50) and, when he refuses, she foretells that she will thwart his intentions and "From tragic stuff to be a pleasant comedy" (ln. 70). *Mucedorus* returns to these two figures in the epilogue as Envy admits his failing, Comedy gloats, and they both beg the audience's approval. This framing device, which due to both characters' awareness of the audience, unambiguously constructs a *platea* through which we are meant to interact with the *locus* of the main plot. And, since these two characters never transition into the *locus*, they in turn distance us from the drama's main action and ask us to evaluate it in terms of their disagreement. It seems probable, because of this dialogue and his clear familiarity with one of Sidney's other works, *Arcadia*, that *Mucedorus*' author is sending up Sidney's attacks on mixed genre. *Mucedorus*, despite Comedy's claims, does include a death teamed with a clown and a comic ending, which points to the possibility that the author may have been attempting to point out Sidney's own hypocrisy by emphasizing the disconnect between Sidney's chastising of the theatre for staging works that mixed the comic and the tragic, when he had already penned a prose work, in *Aracdia*, that blends, in the context of romance, comic and tragic elements.

Piero and his men come upon the three of them and capture her. The play concludes with Andrugio, his face covered by his helmet, coming to Piero's court and offering his own head to Piero, which Piero does not realize is still attached to Andrugio. Piero accepts and rewards the disguised Andrugio, thinking that Andrugio is, in fact, dead. When Andrugio's ruse is revealed, Piero appears to forgive his former enemy. Then a coffin that contains what appears to be Antonio's corpse is brought on stage. Andrugio tells Piero that Antonio, overwhelmed by the loss of Mellida, has killed himself. Piero forgives Antonio, Antonio gets up out of the coffin, and Piero miraculously agrees to let Antonio and Mellida marry. Andrugio is given the reward promised for his head and the play ends with Piero emphasizing the unification of the two families in Antonio and Mellida's impending nuptials. The overall plot is certainly in keeping with many of the standard expectations of both Tragicomedy and Romance, but the plot itself is not where the play violates generic expectations. The dissonance created through the manipulation of generic markers and the reflexive frameworks that surround the plot offer a new model of genre-blending that lays the groundwork for a distinctly non-Italianate approach to Tragicomedy.

Antonio and Mellida's destabilization of genre first occurs in the induction, which, through the disruption of standard dramatic generic markers, keeps the audience from being able to discern the play's genre. While at the end of this jocular sequence the play labels itself as a Comedy, the very structure of the induction undermines that label and forces the audience to question the possibility of ever classifying the play's genre. The induction brings to the stage eight of the boy actors who will appear in the main action of the play, scripts in hand. They go on to discuss what roles they are playing and

the difficulties of those roles. The actors are referred to by the names of their characters, but it is clear, as the following dialogue demonstrates, that these are the actors playing themselves.

'Galeazzo'	Come sirs, come! The music will sound straight for entrance. Are ye ready? Are ye perfect?
'Piero'	Faith, we can say our parts. But we are ignorant in what mould we must cast our actors.
'Alberto'	Whom do you personate?
'Piero'	Piero, Duke of Venice.
'Alberto'	O, ho! Then thus frame your exterior shape To haughty form of elate majesty, As if you held the palsy-shaking head Of reeling chance under your fortune's belt In strictest vassalage. Grow big in thought, As swoll'n with glory of successful arms.
'Piero'	If that be all, fear not, I'll suit it right. Who cannot be proud, stroke up the hair, and strut? (Marston *Ant. & Mellida* induction ln. 1-14)

The whole scene offers the audience a glimpse into the backstage preparations of the boy actors. It serves to introduce the viewer to many of the primary characters, just as we are introduced to Piero in the above quotation, and the induction also provides an interpretation of those characters. At the same time, however, it serves to distance the audience from the action that follows. This staging of actors in an almost Brechtian manner disrupts the traditional Senecan frame that usually functions to define a genre-specific worldview for the play. In plays like Seneca's *Thyestes*, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, and Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, as well as in *Mucedorus*, the inductive opening scenes act as a signpost that points to the play's dramatic framework and its genre-

specific rules.[27] *Thyestes* and *Spanish Tragedy* both use the induction to introduce Revenge as a deity-like figure that interacts with the spirits of the dead. In both cases the dialogue between Revenge and the ghost clearly indicates that the plot that follows will be centered on vengeance. In neither of these plays does the induction highlight the identity of the actor outside of his role, and thus neither play constructs an additional dramatic layer that serves to remind the audience of the out-of-character identity of the actor.

By contrast, *Antonio and Mellida*'s induction stages the jocular interactions of young actors as they prepare to perform. This creates a dramatic effect that begins to bridge the gap between the audience and the actors, which serves to define the worldview of the actual, real-world theatre space. Though the interactions between the boy actors are generally light-hearted and comical, their distance from the virtual world of the play makes it difficult for the audience to pin down the induction's relationship to the play as a whole. In this case the play's construction of a *meta-platea*, constituted by the induction, begins the audience's experience of the work with a disruptive distance that defers the identification of genre. The disruptive quality that this sort of beginning almost certainly evoked in Elizabethan spectators leaves the viewer unsure of what the rest of the play will entail. This would have probably been an odd experience for an early modern

[27] In my non-tragic example, the effect is similar. *Taming of the Shrew* begins with the hoodwinking of Sly, which involves his drunkenness and his inability to read his situation (that he is being tricked into thinking he's a nobleman and that the woman he is supposedly married to is actually a cross-dressed man). Sly's shortcomings along with the induction's overall humorous nature mark the story that follows as a distinctly comic one. *Mucedorus* literally stages a debate between Comedy and Tragedy (who is referred to as "Envy") as they vie for control over the play. This conflict stages the back and forth that is so central to *Mucedorus*' mixed generic form.

English audience that was accustomed to plays whose generic conventions tended to guide them to employ a particular interpretive lens.[28]

Marston then chooses to end the induction with what appears to be an obvious marker of genre. The play labels itself a Comedy, but in the same breath resists that label by mentioning the possibility of a sequel. The scene's penultimate line constitutes a tantalizingly, but problematic, predictive statement uttered by the boy actor who will play Antonio:

> 'Antonio' Right, Therefore I have heard that those persons, as he and you, Felice, that are but slightly drawn in this comedy, should receive more exact accomplishment in a second part, which, if this obtain gracious acceptance, means to try his fortune. (Marston *Ant.& Mellida* induction ln. 128-131)

Marston seems in these lines to be making an attempt to alleviate the disruptive effect of the induction with a direct reference to a specific genre. He marks the play as "this comedy" and at least partially defuses any potential for tragedy by pointing to the possibility that the play could have a sequel.[29] Yet, in pointing to the play's potential to accept "a second part," the play is again disrupting formal boundaries. Traditional models of dramatic genre do not allow for sequels. Aristotle connects both tragic and comic

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[28] For a more complete discussion of the connection between audience expectation, generic form, and efficacy see Marissa Greenberg's chapter, "Crossing from Scaffold to Stage: Execution Processions and Generic Conventions in *The Comedy of Errors* and *Measure for Measure*" in *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism*.

[29] While it is true that one could make a case that the induction is not necessarily part of the original text and was added during the play's original printing in 1602, which was after the staging of *Antonio and Mellida*'s sequel, *Antonio's Revenge*, in 1601, there are a number of reasons to see the induction as an original component of the text. Tiffany Stern makes an extremely good case for prologues (and also epilogues) as being indicative of first performance or performance where "rejection is a possibility" (199). It just so happens that *Antonio and Mellida*'s induction both directly notes that it will be followed by such a prologue and the induction's discussion of the play's potential sequel uses the same sort of language (specifically in its attempt to elicit "gracious acceptance" (induction ln. 131) and the conditional quality of that statement which implies that judgment cannot yet have been passed) that Stern associates with prologues and epilogues written for new plays (176-177). This is reinforced by Sturgess' gloss on the above quoted line, "reference to *Antonio's Revenge*. However, Felice does not appear there and Galeazzo receives no development. Clearly the Induction was written before the sequel was anything more than a good idea" (301).

structure to a requirement for an outcome. In the case of tragedy that outcome is what Aristotle labels "affliction," while for Comedy we can certainly extrapolate from Aristotle's discussion of lesser tragedies:

> The second-best pattern [for tragedy] (which some hold to be the best) is the kind which involves a double structure (like the *Odyssey*) and contrasting outcomes for good and bad characters. It is the weakness of audiences which produces the view of this type's superiority; poets are led to give the spectators what they want. But this is not the proper pleasure to be derived from tragedy – more like that of comedy: for in that genre people who are outright foes in the plot (say, Orestes and Aegisthus) go off as friends at the end, and nobody is killed. (Aristotle 45)

Here we get a rare glimpse of Aristotle's views on Comedy, and in this case they are concerned almost exclusively with how the plot is resolved. Aristotle's emphasis in this quotation on what occurs "at the end" is striking and consistent with his larger discussion of tragic poetry.[30] Genre for Aristotle, and thus to some degree for early modern drama, was defined almost exclusively by outcome and how the plot as a whole justifies and culminates in those outcomes. And it is this outcome-based model of genre that Guarini uses to justify Tragicomedy in his critical discourse:

> This is done [in Tragicomedy] in such a way that the imitation, which is the instrumental end, is that which is mixed, and represents a mingling of both tragic and comic events. But the purging, which is the architectonic end, exists only as a single principle, which unites two qualities in one purpose, that of freeing the hearers from melancholy. (Guarini 512)

Guarini distinguishes between "instrumental end" and "architectonic end" to rationalize Tragicomedy's hybrid generic structure.[31] His assertion that the generic mixture functions solely on an "instrumental" or, to put it in more modern parlance, 'means' level allows him to claim that the play's 'ends' are wholly unified. Guarini effectively asserts that,

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[30] It also surprisingly enough sounds like an extremely early definition of Tragicomedy (i.e. Tragicomedy is a lesser Tragedy in which there are "contrasting outcomes for good and bad").

[31] Architectonic: "**3** Having the function of superintendence and control, *i.e.* having the relation that an architect bears to the artificer employed on the building; directive, controlling. (So used in Greek by Aristotle)" (OED). Guarini is using it to point out that the purging of emotion, which derives from the climax of a given complex plot, is the organizing principle around which the play as a whole is structured. Genre blending is just a technique for achieving that end in Guarini's model.

generically speaking, the 'ends' justify the 'means,' and it is this concept that Marston's structure appears to be consciously subverting. Instead, Marston offers a play where the 'means' have no 'ends' to justify them; the result is a play that stops but never concludes.

So how does an early seventeenth-century English audience discern the genre of a play that self-identifies as incomplete? The short answer is they cannot. Without a clear-cut ending, the play is impossible to label. Thus the induction sets up the rest of the play as a complete mystery to the audience. Foakes argues that both Tragicomedy and Romantic Comedy rely on tropes that establish "comic order" (74), one that lets the audience in on the fact that the plot will be resolved in accordance with comic logic – no matter how dire the story appears. Marston's gesture toward a sequel inherently disrupts what Foakes refers to as "comic pointers" (75). This creates an atmosphere of suspense for the audience. Each event must be evaluated only in terms of the events in the plot that have preceded it, instead of being evaluated in terms of its relationship to a larger generic context. *Antonio and Mellida* becomes a blank slate on which Marston has free reign to experiment with the function of individual dramatic structures outside of the greater conventions of genre.

Antonio and Mellida almost immediately takes advantage of the freedom that the induction's disruption accords. From the very first lines of the first scene of the first act, Marston restages conventional dramatic tropes in ways that destabilize the audience's interaction with the play. When Antonio enters for the first time, he bemoans his father's apparent death during a sea battle against Piero, Mellida's father, and he laments the seeming impossibility of reuniting with his love, Mellida. But this relatively standard beginning is immediately disrupted by two distinct elements: the transition from the

comic induction and the lighthearted prologue to this seemingly tragic lament, and the fact that this monologue is being offered by a character who enters cross-dressed. Antonio is described in the stage direction as "disguised like an Amazon" (1.1.1).[32] He does not conclusively identify himself as male until the seventh line of his speech when he addresses himself by name. The perceptive viewer would have learned that the character of Antonio would be disguised as an Amazon from the induction, but he would not yet have heard the boy actor's apparently feeble attempt at a woman's voice, which the boy playing Antonio laments (65-69). The viewer in performance is confronted in either case by a generic uncertainty and instability that potentially eludes the modern reader. This confusion is produced by the question of Antonio's identity and how that identity fits into the genre of the moment:

Antonio	Heart, wilt not break? And thou abhorred life, Wilt thou still breathe in enraged blood? Veins, sinews, arteries, why crack ye not, Burst and divulsed with anguish of my grief? Can man by no means creep out of himself And leave the slough of viperous grief behind? Antonio, has thou seen a fight at sea, As horrid as the hideous day of doom, (1.1.1-8)

Although the induction and prologue seemed largely comic, the Amazon's lament, due to its use of verse and the absence of obvious humor, appears genuinely tragic, which blurs the distinctions traditionally constructed by generic convention.[33] The passage begins with a series of questions that Antonio uses to rationalize his grief, in much the same way that Hieronimo does upon discovering Horatio's body in *The Spanish Tragedy*:

[32] This stage direction is present in the 1602 printing.

[33] The genuineness is not reduced by the fact that the apparent Amazon is being played by a man given the conventions of the early modern English stage regarding the performance of female roles by male actors.

Hieronimo O earth, why didst thou not in time devour
The vild profaner of this sacred bower?
O poor Horatio, what hadst thou misdone,
To leese thy life ere life was new begun? (2.5.26-29)

Antonio questions his body's response to grief in a rhetorical style quite similar to Hieronimo's questioning of the earth and his son's now absent spirit. This shared tragic tone, however, does not go unquestioned for long in *Antonio and Mellida*. In the seventh line we are confronted by the realization that this is not a male actor playing a female role but a male actor playing a male role who is disguised as a woman.[34] This type of cross-dressing, which is generally associated with Comedy, yet again shifts the audience's generic expectations, but the remainder of Antonio's monologue continues to follow similar tragic protocols. The confusion that this highly self-aware collection of dramatic structures creates leads the viewer to constantly reassess the potential trajectory of the play's plot. Spectators would see each new dramatic trope as a possible hint about how the play will conclude while remaining constantly aware that the play's terminus is not truly the outcome of the plot. This strategy is repeated through the entirety of the play as the action jumps from moments coded as highly tragic to clearly comedic situations.

Another example of this kind of generic disruption comes as the play transitions following Antonio's speech, beginning with the shift to Piero's declaration of his intention to give a ransom to anyone who will bring him Andrugio's and Antonio's heads. The clearly tragic potential of this sequence is demonstrated by Piero's invoking of Seneca: "Pish! *Dimitto superos, summa votorum attigi*" (1.1.60).[35] This line comes from Seneca's *Thyestes*, where it is delivered by Atreus near the beginning of Act V just

[34] Or from the very beginning of the speech for the perceptive viewer of the induction.

[35] Which translates to, "I renounce the powers above; I have attained all that prayers can achieve" (Sturgess 301).

before he reveals to Thyestes that Atreus has fed Thyestes his own sons. Marston, through this direct use of Seneca in a scene that reinforces rather than ridicules Revenge Tragedy logic, is evidently aligning Piero with a great villain from antiquity. The play's continued strategic use of Senecan appropriation also reinforces the tragic potential of the play when it shifts away from the clearly comic.[36] These moments of intertextual reference, particularly given that they involve shifts in language, continue the disruption of genre that permeated the induction. Piero's first appearance is followed by Mellida's entrance with her bawdy servant Rosaline, which quickly leads into the introduction of the braggart soldier Mazzagente, who Rosaline says, "looks / For all the world like an o'er roasted pig" (1.1.124-125). Within the course of just over the first hundred lines of the first scene, the play has shifted from a comic tone to a clearly tragic mood and back into what appears to be a Comedy populated, in Schoenbaum's words, with "a whole gallery of eccentrics, a group of courtiers who belong to the Jonsonian school of fops and gulls" (1071). The inconsistencies in narrative tone and generic reference continue throughout the play as the action shifts between the comic inhabitants of the Venetian court, who are absurd and often bawdy caricatures, and the tragic potential of Piero's threats against Antonio and Andrugio.

This disruptive approach is heightened by a type of inversion of dramatic irony in which the play disseminates information meant to mislead the viewer. This inversion consists of the audience repeatedly being fed information from a point of view that is either incomplete, mistaken, or fooled – information that is not, in fact, true in the world of the play. In the case of Antonio's opening speech this information comes in two parts:

[36] Piero continues quoting Seneca's *Thyestes* in 1.1.78, "Why then, *O me caelitum excelsissimum*!" which translates to "I am the highest of the gods" (Sturgess 302). Atreus speaks this line in the same speech mentioned earlier that begins Act V.

first, the apparent introduction of Antonio as female and, second, the report that Antonio's father, Andrugio, is dead. The first of these assertions is quickly dispelled, but the latter is not corrected until the beginning of the third act when Andrugio first enters. While Piero almost immediately proclaims that he wishes Andrugio's head brought to him, the play never presents us with any reason to believe that Andrugio is actually alive until his entrance. The play's tendency to conceal information from the audience is also evident in the final scene of the play when Andrugio tells Piero that Antonio has committed suicide. This moment of obfuscation stands out all the more because it seems to be the crux of Piero's apparent conversion.

Looking more closely at the final scene of *Antonio and Mellida*, we see that it does not stage the sort of miraculous moment of stabilization that recent critics often associate with the tragicomic form.[37] Instead, given the public nature of the scene, Marston is staging Andrugio and Antonio's ability to manipulate the conventions of the scene's courtly locale by activating a cultural performance in which Piero becomes powerless to attack them due to the mores that govern such events. The staged social ritual in this instance acts as the medium for political maneuvering, which Marston, over the course of *Antonio and Mellida* and its sequel, effectively portrays as temporary and, in the long run, ineffective. This moment of cultural performance is set up by the first half of the scene during which time the audience is presented with a number of courtly

[37] It is this difference that Lawrence points out as the primary separation between Marston's construction of Tragicomedy in *The Malcontent* and Guarini's approach in *Il pastor fido*, "The difference between the two plays [*Malcontent* and *Il pastor fido*], and it is a significant distinction in the Italian and English tragicomic forms, is that the schemers in *Il pastor fido* are defeated by the emergence of an unexpected but clear providential pattern, whereas those in *The Malcontent* are overcome by the superior plots of the central dramatic character" (161). What Lawrence does not note is that what he refers to as the distinguishing characteristic of Italian Tragicomedy, its 'clear providential pattern,' which in the case of *Il pastor fido* comes from revelations of identity, is also a central trope in many English Tragicomedies (i.e., *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, and *A King and No King*). Lawrence is certainly right to point out that *The Malcontent* does engage with Guarini's work, but that is not the play's sole generic concern.

performances. These performances, a singing contest and a masque, each serve as examples for how the manipulation of courtly events can be temporarily converted into control. These two moments act as venues for the women in the court to temporarily create efficacy within the play's *locus* by manipulating the events occurring in the *meta-locus* and *meta-platea*.

The scene begins with a singing contest organized by Piero, which constructs an analogue for the rewarding ceremony that ends the scene. Rosaline, Piero's shrewish and lascivious niece, requests the right to serve as the contest's 'umpiress' and in so doing becomes the model of how cultural performances can be navigated in the courtly world by those who understand their rules. This interaction also serves as prelude to Piero's inability to control the courtly world later in the scene. The singing contest has three participants: two pages and Jeffery Balurdo, a foolish member of the court who is a late entry to the contest. The first page sings, constructing a *meta-locus*, which is followed by Rosaline's commentary:

Rosaline	By this gold, I had rather have a servant with a short nose and thin hair than have such a high-stretched, minikin voice.
Piero	Sweet niece, your reason?
Rosaline	By the sweets of love, I should fear extremely that he were an eunuch. (5.2.9-13)

Here Rosaline's ulterior motives become clear. She has no interest in judging the singing, but in sizing up potential partners for intimate liaisons. Piero tries to redirect the contest back toward the musical as the second page sings, but his attempts are foiled by Balurdo's entrance. Balurdo, who appears to be the only adult contestant, immediately

draws Rosaline's favor despite his absurd speech, which is riddled with malapropisms.[38] He also blurs the line between singer and virtual audience, by directly addressing Rosaline, Piero, and the rest of the *locus* both before and after his song. His shift into the *meta-platea* and his haphazard participation in the contest signal his idiocy, as they point out that he does not understand its rules. But, since Rosaline has co-opted the competition she rewards him despite his clearly inappropriate behavior. Rosaline enters the performance by presenting Balurdo with a golden harp that serves as the contest's trophy and dubs him "Knight of the Golden Harp" (5.2.28-29). Balurdo then asserts that he will make her "Lady of the Silver Fiddlestick" (5.2.30-31), continuing the generally flirtatious quality of their interaction. Here we are given in miniature a model for acquiring control in the world of the court. Rosaline is able to manipulate the singing contest and turn it into an odd sort of virility competition due to Piero's willingness to appear gracious. His own attempts to construct his identity and to fashion an image through staging moments of cultural performance create openings for those like Rosaline to take advantage of these marked public events and to convert them into opportunities to seize control for the duration of that cultural performance. The key is that these moments of exerted control are short lived. Once the singing contest ends, Rosaline clearly returns to a subservient position as Piero cross-examines her on why she is not yet married, and once that concludes she moves to the scene's periphery. Only during the limited time span of the performance does Rosaline retain the control that her court savvy provides.

[38] I would assume that part of the reason for her interest in him derives from his song, but unfortunately the lyrics do not appear in the play. It is also safe to assume that his song is probably bawdy or scatological given that after he finishes singing it he concludes by singing a take off on a popular song, "Monsieur Mingo," which appears in one of Falstaff's scenes in 2 Henry IV 5.3.69-71 (Sturgess 310), which in its original form makes a comical reference to urination.

The scene moves rapidly from the singing contest into a masque. The sequence begins with Galeazzo, Mazzagente, and Balurdo entering, costumed, masked, and displaying a 'device' as they approach each of the ladies for a dance. Galeazzo approaches Mellida, who initially attempts to avoid participation because she is "too sad to dance" (5.2.73). Piero immediately rejects her request. Non-participation, in this case not dancing, is an inappropriate response to cultural performance within the world of the court. Mellida must take part in the *meta-platea* of the pageant, but that does not mean she cannot manipulate the masque's conventions. Mellida must let Galeazzo, the man that Piero wants her to marry, present his device and explain its symbolism, but she is then able to turn his lack of mastery within the space of the cultural performance against him. When he identifies his role within the masque, Mellida uses that admission to draw attention to Galeazzo's own faults in the world of the play. His statement that he will "speak pure fool to thee now" (5.2.93), both points out that he has been out of character earlier in his discussion of the device, but also that he is now planning to transition back into the *meta-platea* that he should have inhabited all along. Galeazzo is basically admitting his failure to properly navigate the cultural performance itself. Mellida picks up on this and uses it to ridicule him, "You will speak the liker yourself" (5.2.93). Not only does she clearly equate him to a 'fool,' but she also points to his performed role as more authentic than his self-presentation within the *locus*. Mellida continues this line of mockery, but once Galeazzo's moment in the masque has passed, she yet again is silenced by the next step in the masque: Mazzagente's device presentation. Rosaline is given the opportunity to ridicule him in much the same way that Mellida did Galeazzo, but Mellida has been whisked away, almost certainly to dance. All of these moments of

control, generated by the courtly savvy of these female characters, are cut short by the duration of the performance that creates the liminal circumstances necessary for them to seize control in the first place.

While these events certainly serve to emphasize Mellida's melancholy at being separated from Antonio and the generally comic atmosphere of the court, encapsulated in Rosaline's banter with both Piero and the foppish Balurdo, they also reinforce the very public, cultural-performance-laden nature of the court space. So when Piero is informed that "Yonder's a knight hath brought Andrugio's head," (5.2.138), Piero immediately sets in motion yet another moment of cultural performance:

> Piero Conduct him with attendance sumptuous,
> Sound all the pleasing instruments of joy,
> Make triumph, stand on tiptoe whilst we meet.
> O sight most gracious! O revenge most sweet! (5.2.140-143)

Piero's call for a certain amount of 'pomp and circumstance' indicates, from the beginning of their dialogue, that Piero wishes his interaction with the man he believes has rid him of his nemesis to be some sort of ceremony of reward and victory. This courtly performance constructs a new *meta-locus*, which Piero means to use to reinforce his authority as much as to reward the knight. Piero knows his role in this interaction, and when Andrugio enters the court with his face obscured by his helm, Piero plays his part perfectly, which is of course exactly what Andrugio is counting on:

> Andrugio [*reading the proclamation*] 'We vow by the honour of our birth to recompense any man that bringeth Andrugio's head with twenty thousand double pistolets and the endearing to our choicest love.'
>
> Piero We still with most unmoved resolve confirm
> Our large munificence; and here breathe
> A sad and solemn protestation:
> When I recall this vow, O let our house
> Be even commanded, stained and trampled on
> As worthless rubbish of nobility. (5.2.144-153)

Andrugio cunningly manipulates Piero's moment of triumph, turning it into his undoing. When Andrugio lifts his visor only a few lines later, Piero is placed in a no-win situation: either he breaks his two vows and has Andrugio arrested in front of the entire court, which would ruin his credibility, or he has to embrace his enemy. Piero chooses the latter: "I joy my state, him whom I loathed before / That now I honour, love, nay more, adore" (5.2.179-180). Andrugio has effectively taken control of the *meta-locus* by trapping Piero within the courtly logic around which it is constructed, which in turn makes Piero appear reformed. This apparent conversion continues when, upon seeing Antonio's supposed corpse, Piero says, "O that my tears, bedewing thy wan cheek, / Could make new spirit sprout in thy cold blood!" (5.2.207-208). Then, after Antonio reveals the ruse and rises out of the coffin, Piero's first words, which are addressed to Antonio, are, "Fair son – now I'll be proud to call thee son –" (5.2.233). Again Piero is forced, due to the social constraints of the cultural performance in which he is participating, to embrace his enemies because he has vowed to give the bringer of Andrugio's head his "choicest love" (5.2.146-147). Andrugio, just like the women earlier in the scene, manages to use the liminality of the space constructed by a cultural performance to take control away from the characters who are empowered in the world of the play. But, unlike those earlier moments, we do not witness any action that occurs in the court once that cultural performance has ended. We are left unable to discern whether or not the efficacy of this performance has a limited duration.

Piero's disruptive shift in character, which appears to many modern critics to be completely without justification in the plot, has been seen as one of the primary weaknesses of the play. Schoenbaum claims,

> Piero is the cause of the lovers' suffering; yet at the most crucial moments he behaves in a manner that can be regarded only as deliberately comic. Marston managed later to learn the essentials of his craft, to purge his style of the grossest of absurdities, (1071)

Schoenbaum chalks up these inconsistencies to Marston's "conflicting emotional energies" (1071), but the cause of the shift is neither accidental nor a result of poor construction. Piero's apparent change in demeanor is a consequence of the play's movement towards its sequel and points to the play's generic incompleteness. The sequel seems to offer an easy solution to *Antonio and Mellida*'s incompleteness; but that sequel, in the process of stabilizing the unstable elements of its predecessor's plot, creates its own instabilities. While Piero's actions are clearly disruptive to the viewer, they are easily understood within the context of the combined plot of the two plays. The second half, *Antonio's Revenge*, begins with Piero having just murdered Andrugio in cold blood. This type of character development, which is not wholly apparent from its original context, makes distinguishing between authentic and inauthentic action within the primary layer of the play's virtual world close to impossible. Piero's position on Andrugio does not change in the last scene of *Antonio and Mellida*; instead, Piero is forced to disguise his hatred, to 'play nice,' because of Andrugio's successful manipulation of the final scene's cultural performance. In so doing, Marston both sets in motion the action of the second play and forces the viewer to reevaluate the apparently happy ending of *Antonio and Mellida*, yet again disrupting the assumed permanence of the tragicomic resolution.

Marston's strategic disruption of the viewer's ability to predict or categorize the play's plot creates an experience that keeps the audience uncomfortable and distanced. The framing and distancing mechanisms that I have described create additional layers of dramatic interaction and each of those layers, like any performance, 'dramatize,' but in

this case they are in effect 'dramatizing' the 'drama.' In her discussion of the ways cultural performances 'dramatize,' Erika Fischer-Lichte describes how performances "frame and demarcate certain scenes and enable a greater vividness of experience and action" (201). This vividness in the case of *Antonio and Mellida* is not mimetic, but is instead almost the opposite; it highlights the limitations of genre and the hollowness of those tropes. Marston creates a Tragicomedy that questions the very possibility of a comic outcome. The self-aware incompleteness of the play, teamed with its hollow resolution, begs, at some level, to be resolved. Marston, of course, does write a sequel to the play, *Antonio's Revenge*, which offers a far more palatable conclusion, but in so doing he points to *Antonio and Mellida*'s need for violence in order to achieve closure. *Antonio and Mellida* seems from the beginning to be engaged very obviously in Revenge Tragedy logic. This is perhaps most evident in Andrugio's highly stoic speeches, Piero's use of Seneca, and Piero's role as tyrant whose crimes can only be punished by breaching of traditional hierarchies. But the play seems to be incapable of defusing that tragic potential with the purely comic. Instead, the sequel stages a Revenge Tragedy that resolves the earlier plot, but in doing so is unable to resolve the generic expectations of Revenge Tragedy fully.

While *Antonio's Revenge* incorporates many of the conventional elements of Revenge Tragedy, in other ways it clearly subverts them. The play culminates, just like *Antonio and Mellida*, with a scene set in the court and littered with marked performances. While the placement of the climactic moment of revenge in the entertainment-laden court space is certainly in keeping with other revenge tragedies of the period, the tone of both the scene and the play as a whole diverge from more canonical interpretations of the

genre. This style, which John Kerrigan refers to as "hostile mirth" (204), is built on a similar framework as the genre blurring that permeates *Antonio and Mellida*. Both strategies are products of each play's reflexive relationship to genre and cultural performance. *Antonio's Revenge* is not invested in the social stabilization that is common to almost all Revenge Tragedies; instead, it begins by appearing to tie up the loose ends left by its predecessor and resolves by constructing a narrative that uses the tragicomic to subvert Revenge Tragedy in much the same way that the logic of Revenge subverts Tragicomedy in *Antonio and Mellida*.

The genre blurring found in *Antonio's Revenge* is elucidated best by exploring the structure and ramifications of its climax. The final scene begins with a series of cultural performances reminiscent of many Revenge Tragedies: Piero enters in false triumph to be entertained by a song and then a masque, which is made up primarily of the dancing of a measure. The triumph that Piero believes he has achieved is the death of Antonio and what Piero believes is Maria, Antonio's mother, consenting to marry him. He requests a song that is provided by a page, while the masque presents itself. The performers in the masque, just as in *The Malcontent*, are those who plan to surprise the Duke – Antonio and his confederates. Their dancing of the measure, much like the singing contest and masque in *Antonio and Mellida* act as indicators to the audience that the court space presented in the scene is one that is dominated by the logic of marked performance. Unlike the vast majority of virtual locations presented in the play, spectating and being spectated generates and reinforces power and control within the confines of the court. During the principal action up until this point, the play, though it is packed with reflexive references to many tropes that are strongly associated with

Revenge Tragedy, has not formed distinct dramatic layers that move away from the audience.[39] While there are a number of moments of song earlier in the play, they are not housed in a clearly marked event that could lead to a sustained *meta-locus* being constructed. Here the court not only constructs a distinct *meta-locus* through the performances of a song and the dancing of a measure, but once those are complete, Andrugio's Ghost enters and constructs a layer that moves toward the audience and reinforces its relationship to the play's violent conclusion.

Once the dance has ended and the feast has been revealed, Andrugio's Ghost enters and says to the audience, "Here will I sit, spectator of revenge, / And glad my ghost in anguish of my foe" (5.3.54-55). The Ghost, by clearly stating his role as a staged audience, constructs a sustained *platea* that transforms the torture and murder of the play's climax into a cultural performance. This constructs a clear parallel between Piero's position of power as a viewer of the earlier performance with his helplessness in this final sequence where the conspirators convince Piero to clear the court, then capture him, relieve him of his tongue, reveal to Piero that he has been fed his son, then kill him, and are effectively rewarded for their efforts. Again we see how the social event's self-contained rules place characters into a space that redefines power dynamics and disrupts hegemony. But, in this case, unlike in *Antonio and Mellida*, that disruption appears to have more permanent effects as the conspirators are not meaningfully chastised for their act of tyrannicide. Just as *Antonio and Mellida* disrupts the permanence of the comic resolution that is so central to Tragicomedy, *Antonio's Revenge* uses a permanent comic

[39] For example, the play uses dumbshows (which appear in *Gorbaduc*), in Act II Balurdo comes on in a half attached fake beard [as Kerrigan points out is a reference to *Spanish Tragedy* (207)], the appearance of Andrugio's ghost (which mimics Seneca's *Thyestes*, *Spanish Tragedy*, and *Hamlet*), and the appearance of a feast on stage (gesturing to *Titus Andronicus*).

resolution to disrupt the stabilizing punishment that results from the tragic conclusion that is vital to Revenge Tragedy. *Antonio's Revenge* achieves generic subversion through the construction of an apparently permanent resolution that does not satisfy the moral retribution so central to the Revenge genre.

The rewarding of a group of conspirators who have successfully assassinated a Duke not only exemplifies the play's generic subversion, but also serves as the framework for displaying the play's blurred generic stance. On completion of this tyrannicide the murderers are questioned by two senators, who inquire, "Whose hand presents this gory spectacle?" (5.3.115). The conspirators each take credit for the deed. They are all promptly thanked by the senators, and the play ends without retribution being taken against any of Piero's killers. One of the members of Piero's court even goes so far as to compare Antonio to Hercules: "Thou art another Hercules to us / In ridding huge pollution from our state" (5.3.128-129). Thus *Antonio's Revenge* resists the stabilizing death, or in this case deaths, that would allow for a non-problematic expression of revenge. In fact, it clearly celebrates the disruptive act. Pandulpho, one of the conspirators, admits that the conspirators should die, presumably by their own hands: "We know the world, and did we know no more / We would not live to know" (5.3.145-146). This line and his later assertion that they will all join a religious order both point to the generic need for stabilization, but also raise a new issue. If they are refraining from committing suicide because it will certainly damn them, then that implies that they do not believe that they are already damned for killing Piero. Not only is Marston blurring the genre and deferring hegemonic stabilization in allowing the conspirators to live, he is also effectively saying that that stabilization will never occur.

This lack of punishment is especially problematic when we consider that Antonio in particular has clearly demonstrated a need to be stabilized because of his approach to revenge. He has not only killed a duke, but also killed that duke's innocent heir in order to add to Piero's suffering. The murder of Julio is made all the more morally convoluted by Antonio and Julio's mutual devotion. As Antonio contemplates his revenge against Piero, Julio comes and comforts him saying, "'Truth, since my mother died I loved you [Antonio] best. / Something hath angered you; pray you, look merrily" (3.2.153-154). Antonio then goes on to embrace the boy and to comment on how much Julio resembles Antonio's deceased love, Mellida. Even though this is a short scene, Antonio and Julio's close friendship, which borders on the familial, is solidly established and, within a few lines, Antonio is stabbing Julio to death. Antonio reasons that while he loves Julio's soul, his body is shared with his father, Piero, and thus must die:

Antonio . . . I love thy soul; and were thy heart lapped up
In any flesh but in Piero's blood,
I would thus kiss it; but being his, thus, thus
And thus I'll punch it.
[*He stabs Julio*]
Abandon fears;
Whilst thy wounds bleed, my brow shall gush out tears.
(3.2.181-185)

Even if one argued that Piero's death is justified, it seems unlikely that one could make that case about Julio's murder. The play forces the viewer to consider the slippery-slope logic of acceptable revenge and of the enjoyment gained from the standard Revenge resolution. While *Antonio's Revenge* resolves in a more stable way than its predecessor, it still leaves the viewer with loose ends that ask to be resolved. Even in this play, one that appears to be designed to give closure to *Antonio and Mellida*, Marston resists traditional tragic outcomes by treating the revengers like the protagonists of a Comedy. Thus *Antonio and Mellida* and *Antonio's Revenge* actively expose the limitations of early

modern generic categories, specifically their inability to map onto dramatic elements that are exceptions to traditional models.

Further Generic Experimentation: *The Malcontent*

The self-reflexive strategies that permeate *Antonio and Mellida* also open up the possibility of a new approach to understanding *The Malcontent*. The latter presents many of the same reflexive devices that make the former's engagement with Tragicomedy so distinctive. In particular, Marston's treatment of Altofronto's shifting between his authentic self and his 'malcontent' disposition creates the same deferment of generic recognition that is such a distinctive trait of its predecessor. This shifting back and forth of generic markers elicits an audience response that must constantly reconsider the play's genre, and this instability and uncertainty lead to an imbalanced climax like that seen in the *Antonio* plays. And, just like that of its predecessors, the conclusion of *The Malcontent* relies on the staging of a cultural performance as the catalyst for its potentially temporary resolution. Even without a sequel, *The Malcontent*'s investment in alternative generic logics yields a conclusion as temporary as the one found at the end of *Antonio and Mellida*. When seen through this lens, *The Malcontent* is an even more striking example of Marston's alternative model for Tragicomedy, one that values those strategies that distance the audience and force them to reconsider the boundaries between genres.

From the very first moments that Altofronto steps on stage in *The Malcontent* his two identities are separated by both the stage directions and his dialogue. When he initially appears, clearly in the guise of Malevole, he is surrounded by low comic characters and introduced by "*The vilest out-of-tune music*" (1.1.1). The satirical nature

of his 'malcontent' demeanor is made immediately apparent by both its context and Altofronto's speech:

> Malevole — Yaugh, God o'man, what dost thou there? Duke's Ganymede, Juno's jealous of thy long stockings. Shadow of a woman, what wouldst, weasel? Thou lamb o'court, what dost thou bleat for? Ah, you smooth-chinned catamite! (1.2.5-8)

This catalogue of insults gives a very distinct picture of Malevole's character as a bitter and melancholic clown who, we find out later in the scene, espouses only "a soldier's religion" (1.3.8). But once Malevole finishes agitating Pietro with intelligence of Aurelia's infidelity, Marston presents us with Altofronto's 'authentic' self *solus*:

> Malevole — Farewell.
> Lean thoughtfulness, a sallow meditation,
> Suck thy veins dry, distemperance rob thy sleep!
> *The heart's disquiet is revenge most deep.*
> *He that gets blood the life of flesh but spills,*
> *But he that breaks heart's peace the dear soul kills.*
> Well, this disguise doth yet afford me that
> Which kings do seldom hear or great men use,
> Free speech. (1.3.153-161)[40]

Much like the shift between Piero and the inhabitants of his court in *Antonio and Mellida*, Altofronto is able to transition distinctly between genres, the only difference being that Altofronto navigates that transition through his disguise. As with the earlier discussion in this chapter of the ambiguity created by Antonio's cross-dressing, the audience of *The Malcontent* is left to consider during this apparently tragic monologue whether to see the shift in character as a comic disguise or as an element that presages a tragic conclusion. Altofronto's authentic voice is vastly more polished and distinctly adopts the Revenge rhetoric that evokes the Revenge Tragedy genre. Altofronto also abandons Malevole's coarse dialogue and takes on a more elevated and poetic tone, in this case marked by Altofronto's use of verse. This moment, comprising a radical character 'shift,' sets up

[40] Emphasis original to the text.

Altofronto's repeated movement between his two guises, and it is coordinated with the transfer from one generic register to the other. This kind of instability is emphasized in the play when the text literally directs the character to "*shifteth his speech*" (1.4.43) in a stage direction.

This type of generic flip-flopping is also apparent in the opposition between the clearly satirical members of Pietro's court, like Bilioso and Maquerelle, and the text's primary villain, Mendoza. While Bilioso is the constant butt of Malevole's jibes, Maquerelle spends the play trying to corrupt virtuous women and spouting opinions like: "I think he could hardly draw Ulysses' bow, but by my fidelity, were his nose narrower, his eyes broader, his hands thinner, his lips thicker, his legs bigger, his feet lesser, his hair blacker, and his teeth whiter, he were a tolerable sweet youth" (4.1.56-60). This coarse comic tone is also evident in Maquerelle's discourse on beauty, which references and mocks a speech from Guarini's *Il pastor fido*:

> Maquerelle — Men say! Let men say what the' will! Life o' woman, they are ignorant of our wants: the more in years, the more in perfection the' grow. If they lose youth and beauty, they gain wisdom and discretion, but when our beauty fades, goodnight with us! There cannot be an uglier thing to see than an old woman, from which, oh pruning, pinching and painting, deliver all sweet beauties. (2.4.43-49)

As Munro points out, these lines echo Corsica's attempts to convince Amarillis to forsake her virtue in Guarini's play (109-110). But, while Munro reads this adaptation as an indication of Marston's indebtedness to its Italian predecessor, *The Malcontent*'s trivialization of its source material should not be overlooked. Munro notes that Corsica's position as antagonist and the real threat posed by her words stand in stark contrast to Maquerelle's bawdy comedy, but Munro then goes on to claim that Marston's reference to Guarini shows *The Malcontent*'s replication of *Il pastor fido*'s worldview (110).

Munro does not, however, engage with the possibility that Marston's use of the text is satirical. In fact Maquerelle's obsession with physical beauty builds on the other aspects of her already bawdy nature – aspects that serve as some of the play's best examples of the unrestrained comedy that breaches Guarinian decorum. By dropping Guarini's language into Maquerelle's grotesque dialogue, filled with "pruning, pinching and painting," Marston makes light of his Italian predecessor, offering a parodic mockery which serves to emphasize, rather than diminish, the polarized nature of the play's generic shifting.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Maquerelle is Mendoza. He follows in the footsteps of Piero and delivers villainous soliloquies highlighted by references to Seneca, saying "First sear my brains! *Unde cadis non quo refert*" (2.1.26), while plotting Malevole's and Pietro's deaths as well as actually stabbing one of his rivals for Aurelia, Ferneze.[41] Mendoza's Machiavellian attitude is perhaps most clearly expressed in his short soliloquy in Act IV, Scene iii, in which he muses on the inconvenience of being indebted to others:

> Mendoza — We that are great, our sole self-good still moves us.
> They shall die both, for their deserts craves more
> Than we can recompense; their presence still
> Imbraids our fortunes with beholdingness,
> Which we abhor; like deed, not doer. Then conclude,
> They live not to cry out 'ingratitude!'.
> One stick burns t'other, steel cuts steel alone;
> 'Tis good trust few, but oh, 'tis best trust none. (4.3.134-141)

Mendoza's unapologetic treachery against those whom he believes are helping him to carry out his machinations – in this case Altofronto and Pietro disguised as Malevole and a hermit, respectively – serves to reinforce the qualities that he shares with Senecan villains. Mendoza's soliloquy continues the logic of classical Revenge drama as he plots

[41] "'Where you fall from, not to where, matters,' Seneca, *Thyestes* ll. 925-6" (Kay 50).

revenge against those who have not yet wronged him. Much like Atreus in *Thyestes*, Mendoza becomes obsessed with the imagined wrongs others have committed and will commit against him, in this case the fact that his supposed minions will retain a tyrannical control over him after they have completed his orders.[42] This paranoid concern over "beholdingness" alludes to the unnatural violence that is so central to the Senecan tradition and so diametrically opposed to the comic logic of the court's farcical characters. This presentation of generically discordant character types, combined with Altofronto's ability to use his disguise to fashion himself as a generic chameleon, marks *The Malcontent* as a text that plays by the same set of rules that operates in *Antonio and Mellida*. Like Marston's earlier plays, *The Malcontent* is not built around markers that clearly define generic expectations, and so it leads audiences to wonder whether they are watching a tongue-in-cheek Revenge Tragedy or a Dark Comedy.

In *The Malcontent* as in *Antonio and Mellida*, the confusion set up by the play's opposing generic markers leads to a seemingly implausible conclusion predicated on the protagonists' ability to manipulate the conventions of a virtual cultural performance. *Antonio and Mellida*'s use of a masked ball is replaced by the promise of a masque, which is introduced by Mercury and appears to star Altofronto and his fellow conspirators. The apparent actors dance with the guests and finally reveal themselves when they surprise Mendoza (5.6.52-115). Again we see how the utilization of the moment of performance allows characters who appear to be in the more vulnerable and lower cultural position to turn the tables on those inhabiting positions of power. Perhaps the best example of this inversion of control comes when the inhabitants of the court

[42] Atreus kills the sons of his brother, Thyestes, and feeds the children to him, because Atreus is concerned that Thyestes may have slept with Atreus' wife.

dance with the conspirators, who are disguised as the actors in the masque that has not yet started. Before the dance, Mendoza requests that Maria, Altofronto's wife, marry him. She turns Mendoza down, which leads him to order her execution. But, once Mercury arrives and the dance begins, the atmosphere shifts.

Mendoza Celso, Celso, court Maria for our love. – Lady, be gracious, yet grace.

Malevole takes his wife to dance

Maria With me, sir?

Malevole Yes, more loved than my breath;
With you I'll dance.

Maria Why then you dance with death.
But come, sir, I was ne'er more apt for mirth,
Death gives eternity a glorious birth;
Oh, to die honoured, who would fear to die?

Malevole *They die in fear that live in villainy.*

Mendoza Yes, believe him, lady, and be ruled by him. (5.6.66-73)[43]

The dramatic layering that results from this cultural event effects the power dynamics of the scene. Mendoza is unable to recognize Altofronto as either himself or as Malevole, instead confusing him for one of the other conspirators, Celso, whom Mendoza believes is still loyal to him. Even Maria is unable to recognize her own husband until later in the scene. The masque and dance construct a liminal space in which recognition and identification become a necessary requirement for control. This point is reinforced by Mendoza's comic misunderstanding of Altofronto's identity and intentions – a misinterpretation indicated in Mendoza's line, "Yes, believe him, lady, and be ruled by him." Mendoza effectively invites Maria to conspire against him without knowing it. Just as in *Antonio and Mellida*, the cunning of the virtuous is able to overcome the hegemonic

[43] Emphasis original to the text.

constraints of the status quo by utilizing performance as a liminal space in which identity and caste distinctions become fluid.

Even though the disruption of Mendoza's authority during the cultural performance is the catalyst for the conclusion of the play, it does not disrupt generic logic on its own. *The Malcontent*, despite its clearly comic elements, is distinctly gesturing toward Revenge Tragedy logic over the last half of the play. What disrupts that logic is an almost absurd return to the situation that originates the play's plot. *The Malcontent*, unlike *Antonio and Mellida*, does not rely on the issues generated by the promise of a sequel to disrupt the classic "comic peripety by which an apparently tragic sequence of events is miraculously turned to benevolent comic ends" (Neill "Turn and Counterturn" 155). Instead, Marston manipulates Altofronto's shifting character to such a degree as to invite incompleteness. Early in the play, Altofronto, speaking as himself, offers an explanation for the coup that removed him from power:

> Malevole . . . Oh truly noble,
> I wanted those old instruments of state,
> Dissemblance and suspect: I could not time it, Celso;
> My throne stood like a point midst of a circle,
> To all equal nearness, bore with none;
> Reigned all alike, so slept in fearless virtue, (1.4.8-13)

Altofronto blames his banished state on his own naïveté. He effectively links his own virtuousness to his downfall, pointing to dishonesty and distrust of those around the ruler as necessary skills for a successful monarch. These lines illustrate the rationale behind Altofronto's creation of Malevole – a guise that empowers him by helping him adopt the underhanded political skills that he lacks. It is the construction of Malevole that allows Altofronto to manipulate the world of the court and to master the rules constructed by the

liminal world of the masque. But once Altofronto achieves his goals, those skills quickly disappear:

Malevole — Base treacherous wretch, what grace canst thou expect,
That hast grown impudent in gracelessness?

Mendoza — Oh, life!

Malevole — Slave, take thy life
Wert thou defenced, through blood and wounds,
The sternest horror of a civil fight,
Would I achieve thee, but prostrate at my feet,
I scorn to hurt thee: 'tis the heart of slaves
That deigns to triumph over peasant's graves. (5.6.122-130)

Here Altofronto reverts back to the sort of behavior that he claims lost him his dukedom in the first place. As Malevole, Altofronto was able to take advantage of any weakness in Pietro or Mendoza. Altofronto, while in disguise, lied, capitalized on his opponents' vices, and used the sexual indiscretions of his enemies against them. But here, in his moment of triumph, he reverts to the virtuous nature that he laments earlier in the play by offering mercy to Mendoza, who until this point has been his nemesis:

Malevole — [*To Pietro and Aurelia*]
You o'er-joyed spirits, wipe your long-wet eyes.
Hence with this man; an eagle takes not flies.
(*Kicks out Mendoza*)
(*To Pietro and Aurelia*)
You to your vows.
(*To Maquerelle*) And thou unto the suburbs.
(*To Bilioso*) You to my worst friend I would hardly give;
Thou art a perfect old knave, all pleased live.
(*To Celso and the Captain,* [*embracing them*])
You two, unto my breast.
(*To Maria,* [*embracing her*]) Thou to my heart.
The rest of idle actors idly part.
As for me, I here assume my right,
To which I hope all's pleased. To all, goodnight!
Cornets, a flourish. Exeunt (5.6.155-163)

In this handful of lines, Altofronto attempts to tie off all of the loose ends formed in the intricate romp that is *The Malcontent* just in time for the epilogue. But, just as in *Antonio and Mellida*, this closing sequence is marked by an empty and unsatisfying

gesture toward resolution. As Michael Scott has astutely pointed out, the central question of the play is "[i]f the protagonist is really the discontented individual which he pretends, the man who pours scorn down on all about him, would he merely dismiss Mendoza as a fly at the end of the play?" (30). Altofronto metes out his decisions almost off-handedly, showing mercy that borders on the irrational. He chooses to punish Mendoza, who has seized Genoa, plotted multiple murders, and attempted to marry Altofronto's wife, by kicking him out. The man who wrongfully ruled Genoa before Mendoza, Pietro, is told to look to his wedding vows. In dropping his 'malcontent' disposition, Altofronto appears to part company with the political savvy and intelligence that have defined him during the previous five acts. As Scott notes, Altofronto reverts to his pre-banished self (30-31) and by so doing invites the audience to question the completeness of the play's conclusion. How can a duke retain control if he will not even punish those who tried to usurp his authority? What kind of duke allows a man who wrongfully occupied his dukedom to remain in his court? If Mendoza were at least imprisoned, the audience could make a case for Altofronto having learned something from his banishment. Instead, it appears Altofronto has learned nothing from his Machiavellian alter ego. While Scott reads this sequence as Marston constructing a sort of anarchic proto-absurdism that points to the hypocrisy of society (30-34), it seems more likely that *The Malcontent*, like *Antonio and Mellida*, is returning to the tropes of Revenge. If we consider that the logic of Revenge Tragedy relies on the inability or unwillingness of the proper authorities to take action in order to create a situation where the individual must act to see justice done, then Altofronto is just such an authority refusing to act. He creates the necessary conditions for Revenge Tragedy at the very moment that the play is concluding. His naïve reversion

sets up the possibility of complication that marks the incompleteness of *Antonio and Mellida*, and while Marston never wrote a sequel to *The Malcontent*, it certainly asks for the sort of bloody closure that *Antonio's Revenge* provides. In each case, Marston's use of Revenge Tragedy tropes to set up a tragicomic turn leaves a plot that begins to gesture toward the cyclical logic of the absurd. Both plays effectively conclude by establishing conditions similar to those from which they began, conditions that either promise continued complications or demand to be resolved through violence.

Building on the foundation of *Antonio and Mellida*, which embraces and calls out for Revenge Tragedy logic, *The Malcontent* sets up the conditions necessary for that logic to thrive. Marston's Tragicomedy, unlike that of his contemporaries, is not concerned with moderation. It is instead driven by a need to disrupt and satirize genre itself. *Antonio and Mellida* provides an excellent example of the discursive potential inherent in the tragicomic form, and perhaps it is that potential that bothered Sidney, who considered Tragicomedy to be "but scurrility unworthy of any chaste ear" (47). By disrupting the accepted efficacy associated with traditional and codified genre, Marston's non-Guarinian Tragicomedy demonstrates the ability to be a form and forum for questioning form itself. In many ways, the incompleteness and suspense seen in these two plays is a by-product of their rejection of the very foundation of early modern conceptions of genre. This "mongrel" approach to genre asks us to reconsider the permanence of dramatic outcome and in turn opens up the possibility of understanding Tragicomedy as a form that does not necessarily retain the stabilizing effect of catharsis. Instead of seeing Marston's contributions to the genre as an anomaly or a failure that obscures an accurate understanding of Tragicomedy, readers today should embrace the ways that these

“mongrel” works usefully complicate and supplement our understanding of the genre in early modern England.

CHAPTER 3

CIRCLING THE NUPTIAL: THE PRESENTATION AND ABSENCE OF MARRIAGE IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*, *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, *AS YOU LIKE IT*, AND *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

Petruccio	Then tell me, if I get your daughter's love, What dowry shall I have with her to wife?
Baptista	After my death the one half of my lands, And in possession twenty thousand crowns.
Petruccio	And for that dowry I'll assure her of Her widowhood, be it that she survive me, In all my lands and leases whatsoever. Let specialties be therefore drawn between us, That covenants may be kept on either hand. (*Taming* 2.1.117-125)

Although the 1967 film version of *The Taming of the Shrew*, directed by Franco Zeffirelli, certainly makes no pretense of attempting to adapt Shakespeare's play for the screen precisely, it does contain two specific changes that, when taken together, force modern readers to reconsider the legal, cultural, and structural reasons for their absence from Shakespeare's text. The first change that the film makes, and perhaps also the more obvious, is the addition between Act III, Scene ii, and Act III, Scene iii, of Katherine and Petruccio's fully staged wedding, which is filled with comic shtick and a potentially troubling climax.[44] The second occurs just after the marriage ceremony and just before the action that makes up the second half of Act III, Scene iii, at which point Petruccio leaves the wedding feast early with Katherine in tow. In this short, dialogue-free sequence, we see Katherine observe her father, Baptista, and Petruccio entering from

[44] While Gremio describes much of the marriage scene in Act III, Scene iii, lines 30-55, the film differs from that description significantly. One of the primary additions to the marriage scene in Zeffirelli's version is that it culminates in what we might recognize as the statement of intention from the modern marriage ceremony except that Katherine, in the process of saying, "I will not," is cut off by Petruccio's kiss, so that she appears to say, "I will."

another room. Petruccio is carrying a chest filled with gold coins, which is almost certainly the "twenty thousand crowns" that Baptista refers to in the above quotation. This short dumb show presents the two men in the final moments of sealing the economic portion of the marital agreement that we see loosely struck in Act II, Scene i. Though the film does not show the overt signing of the "specialties," we do see them shake hands and the clear aftermath of the economic exchange (i.e., the money). The sequence continues as Grumio packs the money and Petruccio resumes the action found in Shakespeare's text. In both cases these are additions that the folio text strongly foreshadows but chooses not to stage and which certainly appear to contain a significant amount of dramaturgical potential. So why is the staging of these overtly contractual moments related to marriage circumvented? And further, why do Shakespeare's comedies seem either to avoid presenting or to strongly undermine nuptial moments that might appear onstage?

While many of the plays addressed in Chapters 1 and 2 use cultural performance to navigate taboos like violence and regicide that are central to the plots of most Revenge Tragedies and many Tragicomedies in early modern English drama, it is important not to forget the issues inherent to the restaging of one particular subset of social rituals: religious rites. Unlike 'metatheatrical' and secular cultural performances, which can serve to 'screen' other issues, restaged moments of religious ritual are, in their own right, taboo. As this chapter and the following will explore, playwrights in the period were forced to develop completely independent strategies in order to handle theological performance. William Shakespeare, particularly in his comedies, uses these approaches to stabilizing the restaging of Christian ceremony to reinforce traditional hegemony and, in the case of marriage specifically, to present its transformative cultural value.

The logic of marriage deeply permeates Shakespeare's comedies, but the staging of wedding ceremonies does not. Of particular interest is that while Shakespeare's comedic work is characterized, as Lisa Hopkins puts it, by "its pervading obsession with marriage" (16), and his comedies go out of their way to set up the requirements for potential weddings, both secular and sacred, they universally seem to be interrupted or destabilized. Though the absence of staged religious marriage ceremonies is easily justified by Queen Elizabeth's effective ban on the staging of religious subject matter in "Proclamation 509, by the Queen, Against Plays, May 16, 1559,"[45] it does not explain why secular marriage rites are avoided and undermined in Shakespeare's comedies. When seen in light of other roughly contemporary plays, like John Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*, which stages an overt secular and clandestine marriage scene and presents a titular character that explicitly defends the practice of non-religious marriage,[46] this absence is all the more apparent.

Much of the critical discourse on marriage in Shakespeare's comedies is built on a discussion about the degree to which English attitudes toward the state of marriage shifted during the Renaissance. The historian Lawrence Stone sees Shakespeare as part of a larger cultural shift in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that involves the development of what might be described as 'modern' attitudes towards family and marriage. More recent critics have tended to question, or at least temper, Stone's

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[45] "And for instruction to every of the said officers, her Majesty doth likewise charge every of them, as they will answer: that they permit none to be played wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonwealth shall be handled or treated" ("Proclamation" 303).

[46] Duchess I have heard lawyers say, a contract in a chamber
Per verba de presenti is absolute marriage.
Bless, heaven, this sacred Gordian, which let violence
Never untwine. (Webster 1.1.467-471)

relatively optimistic interpretation of wedded life in Shakespeare's work and in the period in general. This conversation has largely focused on the inherent violence, subjugation, and pain displayed in each of his plays that explores the topic. Critics, including Carol Thomas Neely and, more recently, Catherine Belsey, have commented on the manner in which these plays stage and then defer wedding moments, which both critics see as part of a larger strategy of cynicism about the married state. Belsey argues that Shakespeare's Comedies use the deferment of marriage and its consummation as part of a strategy intent on capturing the representational nature of romance, pointing out that *Love's Labour's Lost* "teases and tantalizes, offering its audience an experience that in some ways resembles the pleasure of seduction itself" (35). But as she later points out, her interpretation does not see this reproduction of seduction as celebratory. In fact, she argues that "desire's gratification seems to be synonymous with suffering" (53). In this Belsey echoes Neely's reading of these absent marriage contracts as 'broken nuptials,' which offer female characters an illusion of control that is reestablished by the concrete gender roles inherent to early modern marriage itself (57). Frances Dolan's work focuses on the violence that characterizes so many marital relationships depicted in English Renaissance writing, which she sees as a byproduct of the mixed social messages sent by early modern culture. In her reading this is a result of "wives misreading their almost, kind of, nearly equality as complete or actual. This dangerous misunderstanding leads them to contend endlessly with their husbands" (Dolan 101). While these readings certainly make powerful arguments regarding how Shakespeare's plays navigate the realities of gender politics in the period, they do not address the functional realities of trying to present the marriage rite on the early modern English stage. Why does

Shakespeare avoid staging weddings? And, perhaps more importantly, what do the techniques the plays use to replace these marriage acts tell us about how the contractual nuptial ritual was understood in the period?

As I will argue in this chapter, Shakespeare's handling of the legal and religious performatives associated with marriage, while it is almost certainly driven to some degree by concerns about legality and taboo, gave Shakespeare the opportunity to explore how the substitution of other cultural performances could be used to capture the ritual quality of a wedding ceremony. While this allowed Shakespeare to comment on the state of marriage, it provided a far more fertile venue for exploring the transformative cultural and emotional impact of the wedding ritual itself, despite the absence of these moments on stage. This chapter will explore the nature of Shakespeare's avoidance of restaging unmediated legally binding nuptial agreements by focusing on the staging of both marriage's common law requirements and the ecclesiastical rite itself in four of his comedies: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Or, to be more specific, the manner in which all four plays truncate, interrupt, and avoid these moments. These plays not only demonstrate a fascination with the legal, economic, and liturgical ramifications of marriage, but also deftly shift their plots away from using the specifics of early modern marriage rites as the catalyst for comic closure. The problematic nature of marriage as both a social and religious ceremony with significant theological and financial ramifications made its use on stage not only potentially subversive, but also potentially illegal. Instead of using these charged ceremonial moments, Shakespearean Comedy instead finds ways to circle them. Marriage's importance is central, but its appearance is not. In its stead, these plays

are forced to compensate by finding alternative methods for achieving the comic resolution that a marriage would so seamlessly accomplish. This is made possible by using a number of incomplete or undermined marriage sequences to lead into a series of alternative cultural performances that stand in for the marriage and generate an illusion of romantic closure that in turn acts as the catalyst for a comic outcome. In each case Shakespeare is toying with the potentially taboo nature of restaging oral contracts and religious rites, as well as the latent legal complexity associated with marriage in the period, and in so doing creates and then releases a certain cultural tension within his early modern audience, while attempting to capture the transformative character of the marriage ceremony itself.

Contract Law, Anti-Theatrical Logic, Sacrilege, and Performative Utterance

Early modern English culture was deeply invested in the force of oral contracts at every level. As 'Slade's Case' firmly reinforces, economic agreements made orally without a witness were not only legal, but also binding. In the case of *Slade v. Morley*, John Slade brought suit against Humphrey Morley, who promised in May of 1595 to pay Slade sixteen pounds for grain that had yet to come to harvest. Morley agreed to pay the money by the Feast of John the Baptist (June 24th), but did not. When, in September, Slade demanded payment Morley refused, at which point Slade brought suit seeking forty pounds for damages grounded in Morley's actions as constituting trespass against Slade's property as well as a breach of contract despite the fact that there were no witnesses, written agreements, or records of the contract (Sacks 31-33). The Exchequer Chamber's decision, in ruling for Slade, not only set a defining precedent for contract law going forward (by recognizing the validity of *assumpsit* and the legal fiction that justified it),

but also serves as a potent example of the binding nature of oral contracts in the period. It also points to the extremely high stakes of performative utterance in Renaissance England.

Performative utterance, in its simplest sense, relates to uses of language "in which to *say* something is to *do* something" (Austin 12). In this case, as it concerns both trade and marriage, the subset of performative utterance that becomes particularly important is that of promising. 'Slade's Case' demonstrates just how powerful the performative force of an oral contract was in early modern England, but this legal potency was not restricted to buying and selling. As B. J. Sokol and Mary Sokol point out, the accepted models for legal marriage in the period were equally reliant on the bonds created by oral agreements. Marriage, as defined by common law, was organized into two categories: *verba de praesenti* and *verba de futuro*. The first referred to a promise to marry by both parties in the present tense and that agreement "immediately created a valid marriage. Nothing more was needed" (17). The second was a promise to marry by both parties in the future tense that effectively formed a more binding betrothal that would immediately become a full-fledged marriage upon consummation. Both forms were not only legally binding, but required no officiant, witness, documentation, or parental consent.

It should be of no surprise, then, in a culture so dependent on the validity and performative force of the promise, that the artificial reproduction of oral contracts could be considered troubling. In fact, the issue was of such concern to J. L. Austin, a twentieth-century thinker who lived in a time where the written contract had largely replaced oral agreements, that in *How to Do Things with Words* he felt the need to

effectively eliminate the consideration of theatrically reproduced performatives from discussion:

> I mean, for example, the following: a performative utterance will, for example, be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy. This applies in a similar manner to any and every utterance – a sea-change in special circumstances. Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use – ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. (22)

Austin's use of the word "parasitic" to describe this relationship, between 'serious' and 'fictional' performatives is of particular importance. As James Loxley points out when discussing this passage, "not only does such a term suggest that fictional performatives merely copy, or derive from, proper performatives; there is also an unavoidable if attenuated invocation of a moral context" (74). While this passage from *How to Do Things with Words* serves as Derrida's primary grounds for attacking Austin's model for performative language, it also gives us an important glimpse into Austin's discomfort with the ramification of fictional performatives.[47] In effect, the "hollow" quality that he also describes in terms of "etiolation" refers not only to the 'fictional' performative, but also to the effect of performing an inherently "void" speech act. The danger of this, as Derrida points out, is that Austin's model of performative language requires the auditor of that language to be able to decode the context of the performative as either 'serious' or 'fictional.' Derrida puts this in terms of the listener's ability to access the "conscious intention" of the speaker.

> In order for a context to be exhaustively determinable, in the sense required by Austin, conscious intention would at the very least have to be totally present and immediately transparent to itself and to others, since it is a determining center [*foyer*] of context. The concept of – or search for – the context thus seems to suffer at this point from the same theoretical and "interested" uncertainty as the concept of the "ordinary," from the same metaphysical origins: the ethical and teleological discourse of consciousness. (18)

[47] See Jacques Derrida's "Signature Event Context" in *Limited Inc*.

Thus the existence of performative utterance is in effect challenged by the possibility of its being reproduced fictionally. In other words, every time a fictional oral agreement occurs on stage it reinforces the possibility of a similar contract being without performative force in everyday life. And it is this concern, the anxiety that derives from the undermining of the spoken word as an inherently binding and, to some degree, sacred act that Austin inherits from English culture of the late sixteenth century. This same moral concern about the abuse of the spoken word in theatrical performance is at the very heart of the assumptions of many of the most influential anti-theatrical writers of the period.

One of the earliest and also one of the most direct of these written critiques of the threats inherent in the undermining of performative utterance can be found in one of the works of Stephen Gosson, an ex-actor and playwright who was also one of the most influential anti-theatrical writers of the period: *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* [1582]. In this work, unlike in his earlier *The School of Abuse* [1579], Gosson attacks not just the content of plays, but also the dangers of the art form itself. In the second of his five actions, Gosson is refuting one of the classic arguments of theatrical apologists, that the stage is capable of teaching virtuous behavior, when he engages directly with the potential threat that the demonstration of fictional performative utterance carries.

> Peradventure you will say that by these kind of plays the authors instruct us how to love with constancy, to sue with modesty, and to loath whatsoever is contrary unto this. In my opinion, the discipline we get by plays is like to the justice that a certain schoolmaster taught in Persia, which taught his scholars to lie, and not to lie; to deceive, and not to deceive, with a distinction how they might do it to their friends, and how to their enemies; to their friends, for exercise; to their foes, in earnest; wherein many of his scholars became so skillful in practice, by custom so bold, that their dearest friends paid more for their learning than their enemies. I would wish the players to beware of this kind of schooling, lest that whilst they teach youthful gentlemen how to love, and not to love; how to woo, and not to woo, their scholars grow as cunning as the Persians. (95)

The allegory of the Persian Schoolmaster, which Gosson draws from Xenophon, is transformed from a discussion about the dangers of teaching subterfuge to a critique of the abuse of performative language.[48] Gosson's discussion of the problems that arise from teaching students to lie quickly shifts to the threat imbedded in using drama to teach gentlemen how to love – a threat that seems to be wrapped up in the dangers of hollow wooing. If a gentleman is taught by the stage how to affect the appearance of love, then how is the woman he woos supposed to be able to judge if his promises are valid? Or, to put it another way, how is she to discern the context in which the performative utterance is delivered? This section of *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* effectively asks the question: if theatre is used to teach people how to use performative language in a context where those speech acts have no performative force, what keeps those who have learned these skills out of context from divorcing the binding nature of the performative from the performative utterance regardless of context? Gosson's position is that nothing keeps those who learn from the stage from divorcing the spoken performative from its intent. The tract goes so far as to suggest that the sort of wooing taught by the theatre will lead to "mischief that may privately break into every man's house" (95). *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* demonstrates that Gosson, and almost certainly early modern English culture more generally, does not clearly distinguish between untruth and false promise. Gosson's position elides lying (making a statement with a clear truth value) with enacting a performative without the internal conviction it is meant to represent (a statement which cannot be evaluated as true or false when it is spoken).

This logic certainly is not limited to discussions of the theatre's potential effect on courtship; it also has extremely serious theological ramifications in the period. Philip

[48] Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, Book I, Chapter vi, Section 31.

Stubbes in *Anatomy of Abuses* [1583], though he is willing to acknowledge the value of certain "honest and chaste plays" (117), generally attacks what he perceives as the prevailing practices of the early modern English stage for mixing the sacred and the profane, which in turn undermines the veneration and performative value of the former through connection to the latter. Stubbes leans on biblical precedent to reinforce the importance of this issue: "In the first of John, we are taught that the word is God, and God is the word. Wherefore whosoever abuseth this word of our God on stages in plays and interludes, abuseth the majesty of God in the same;" (118). While Stubbes does not give specific examples of Renaissance playwrights who have mingled divine and base elements, he does specifically describe the sort of holy language that is abused, "The word of our salvation, the price of Christ's blood, and the merits of his passion," (118). Even though *Anatomy of Abuses*' argument does primarily object to the restaging of biblical material, specifically pointing to the language and narrative of the New Testament that were hallmarks of Medieval Mystery Plays, it also objects to any potential use of religiously charged language on stage: "abuse God no more, corrupt his people no longer with your dregs, and intermingle not his blessed word with such profane vanities" (118). This 'abuse,' in Stubbes' eyes, robs sacred language of an elevated quality, which he refers to as "majesty." The tract's use of this term is of particular interest, because "majesty" connotes not just dignity or importance, but also authority. By pointing to how "majesty" is undermined by association with "profane vanities," his argument returns us to Derrida's concern with context as it relates to performative utterance. Just as Gosson is concerned about the social chaos that could result from demonstrating to young men how to abuse the performative nature of wooing, Stubbes is objecting to the potential moral

vacuum that could result from undermining the performative power of religious language. Though it is reasonable to see *Anatomy of Abuses* as specifically concerned with the theatre undermining the authority granted to sermons, that does not mean that we should ignore the potential ramifications of Stubbes' case as it relates to other types of religious language, specifically the overtly performative nature of rituals like the marriage ceremony. Gosson and Stubbes are both indirectly pointing to the cultural risk associated with questioning the sanctity and, as a necessary consequence, authority of religious speech acts through a destabilization of context, without which they see the very fabric of early modern society fragmenting.

William Rankin's *A Mirror of Monsters* [1587] elaborates on the issue of theatre as a breeding ground for the blasphemous destabilization of the authority connected to religious language. Rankin, who takes a uniquely literary approach to anti-theatrical writing, addresses the potential dangers of restaging Christian religious performatives and begins to also point to the potential threat posed by replacing those performatives in dramatic works. His justification for attacking theatre, despite the fact that it was sponsored by the Crown, centers on the issue of staging theatrical performances on the Sabbath, a practice prohibited by law eighteen years earlier in 1569. Using an anachronistic logic, *A Mirror of Monsters* points to the fact that actors once performed on the Sabbath as evidence of theatrical performers having a general lack of respect for divinity: "When first these monsters [actors] came to Terralbon, such was their proud presumption that they feared not to profane the sabbath, to defile the Lord's day, to scoff at his sword, and to stage his wrath" (126).[49] Of particular interest in this passage is Rankin's elision of undermining "the Lord's day" and mocking his power with

[49] Rankin uses the word "Terralbon" as a way of allegorically referencing England.

reproducing God's wrath on stage. While it is certainly possible that a theatrical production could "scoff at his sword" by restaging divine fury in an intentionally comical manner, Rankin appears to be making a more general claim: that the act of attempting to present divine intervention in and of itself cheapens the majesty of God.

But, interestingly enough, it does not follow in Rankin's logic that the staging of non-Christian religious performatives, even if they prove impotent within the context of the dramatic narrative, undermines their authority. In fact he makes the opposite case, "by calling on Mahomet, by swearing by the temples of idolatry dedicated to idols, by calling on Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and other such petty gods, they do most wickedly rob God of his honor, and blaspheme the virtue of his heavenly power" (132). Rankin's argument wants to have its cake and eat it too, which it justifies through an invocation of idolatry; in his mind, the staging of Christian religious ritual and divinity undermines their majesty by effectively making them performed idols while staging non-Christian religious practice has the opposite effect because it promotes blasphemous idol worship. Rankin's rhetoric effectively replaces the threat of the unraveling of society present in Gosson's and Stubbes' work with a more general appeal to avoid sacrilege. But that appeal is also grounded in the contextual dangers of the stage. Restaged performatives, whether or not sanctioned by early modern culture, are operating in a liminal context. The very staging of performative utterance potentially exposes an early modern audience to foundational issues of authority which make up much of the basic hegemony inherent in early modern English culture.

This cultural minefield is at some level an issue for any playwright in the late sixteenth century. How does a writer of Comedy in the period navigate the contextual

complexity of performative utterance and its relationship to theology while still writing a play that culminates in marriage? Or to be even more precise, how does an English Renaissance playwright navigate marriage at all? Shakespearean Comedy handles these issues by developing a number of unique strategies that harness the taboo nature of the restaged religious performative. His work, instead of just eliminating weddings outright, finds ways to replace the ceremonial and performative elements with other, less charged restaged cultural performances. In so doing, Shakespeare is able to capture the impact of the contractual moment without actually restaging it.

Skipping to the Reception in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*

While Shakespeare's avoidance of restaged marriage rituals is consistent, the strategies he adopts and the dramaturgical effects that those choices create certainly are not. Two of his earliest forays into the comic genre, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, adopt very similar approaches, which differentiate them from his later comedies *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Both *Midsummer* and *Taming* have plots that necessitate marriages, which occur during the course of the plays' actions, and in both cases these plays deftly skip over those ceremonies. But Shakespeare does not just leave his audience with a missing scene; he builds in what appear to be necessary transitions, never actually staging a context appropriate for how marriage is defined in either play. Instead the viewer is presented with scenes that stage the thresholds of that ritual framework. To be more specific, each play creates a space that invites the audience to watch as the characters transition into and out of the nuptial context and then moves to a scene that uses another restaged cultural performance to

mark the completion of the un-staged wedding. In the case of *Midsummer*, the social ritual that stands in for the circumvented marriage is the 'metatheatrical' performance of 'The Rude Mechanicals,' while *Taming of the Shrew* accomplishes that evasion through the extended rituals of hawk taming drawn from falconry. In both plays, that restaged social ritual develops a *meta-locus* that invites the viewer into a dramatic layer that develops an alternative ritual logic that stands in for the marriage itself and offers a substitute liminal ceremony that communicates that a certain rite of passage has occurred within the world of the play without actually reproducing a marital performative.

These stand-in social rituals have traditionally been seen by critics as part of a strategy intent on using cultural performance as the catalyst for catharsis bent on communicating a unified position on incorporation, community, and fertility. Adrienne Eastwood connects a number of these ritual moments with the poetic genre of epithalamium and in so doing points to the staged events between the wedding and its consummation as a focal point for discussions of both domestic and public power. As she notes, "As this epithalamic sub-genre intersects with the larger framework of the comedic genre, it signals a hierarchically ordered resolution – one that, at least on the surface, celebrates the couple (or couples) and anticipates consummation" (241). But, particularly in the works of Shakespeare, she sees the treatment of these moments as distinctly problematic, stressing the "precarious process" (257) his plays use to enact 'epithalamic concord' and how they "focus more intently on disrupting that concord by stressing its artificiality" (259). Edward Berry, on the other hand, offers a far more optimistic reading of the social rites that Shakespeare uses to replace the restaged marriage ceremony.

> Although the comic recognitions are modes of incorporation, to call them rites would be misleading; many are internalized and even inarticulate. More ritualistic, and more potent dramaturgically, are the stylized gestures of union that figure so prominently in the final

> scenes. These ceremonies often achieve a cumulative impact. In many of the plays, they set right earlier travesties of union that symbolize the disorder of the liminal phase – (178)

While Berry at first focuses on discreet personal acts, specifically "the giving of chains, rings, and kisses" (178), his argument does point to entertainments as one of Shakespeare's approaches to dramatizing incorporation, which he argues "are subtly expressive of the couples and communities they bind together" (188).

What these arguments about Shakespeare's use of cultural performances as replacements for the performative construction of marriage overlook is the pragmatism of their inclusion. For a late sixteenth-century playwright, like Shakespeare, to produce the kind of dramatic efficacy created by a restaged wedding ceremony, he had to find an alternative and appropriate ritual logic that captured the nuanced impact required by the play's plot. That is to say, while these obfuscating cultural performances, housed in 'metatheatricality' and falconry, respectively, are all part of the same pragmatic rationale, each has been chosen to communicate different effects latent in restaging the marriage ceremony. They all have the same purpose, but generate different results. This device's primary function is more dramaturgic than thematic, which allows its thematic uses to be more varied.

A Midsummer Night's Dream serves as an excellent starting point for this discussion primarily because of the directness with which the play handles its embedded but un-staged marriages. In fact, *Midsummer* is a play whose entire narrative is both framed and preoccupied with how to handle marriage, both narratively and dramaturgically. The play from the outset invites the audience to consider how the performance will navigate that ceremonial context; Theseus literally begins the piece by directly referencing one of the play's three forthcoming weddings, "Now, fair Hippolyta,

our nuptial hour / Draws apace" (1.1.1-2). This marriage ceremony, which Theseus promises will be performed "with pomp, with triumph, and with reveling" (1.1.19), is set up from the play's opening moments as the natural culmination of its action. So, when the scene immediately continues with Egeus coming to complain about his daughter's unwillingness to marry the man he has chosen for her, Demetrius, the play's conflict is also almost instantaneously constructed around a wedding as a necessary closure to the plot's already apparent comic logic. *Midsummer*, in its very first scene, introduces the audience to all six of the characters who will later be married and sets up their initial love for one another, including Lysander's plan to marry Hermia at his aunt's house where "the sharp Athenian law / Cannot pursue" (1.1.162-163). Even Bottom and his 'rude mechanical' compatriots require Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding as the necessary conclusion of their subplot, "Here is the scroll of every man's name which is thought fit through all of Athens to play in our interlude before the Duke and the Duchess on his wedding day at night" (1.2.4-6). Yet, while the action clearly begins with overt foreshadowing of the nuptials to come, once the magical intervention of Puck and Oberon has aligned the affections of the four lovers, the audience is greeted by a second round of exposition about these marriages.

This return to a direct discussion of the timetable and relative space of the upcoming and culminated wedding stages the thresholds of the nuptial context. Since we are never given a scene that takes place in the temple or stages any of the assumed requirements of the very formal wedding arranged by Theseus, there is never a distinct threat of witnessing a restaged, and thus necessarily hollow, performative ritual. Instead the play gives us clear indicators as to when relative to the chronology of the staged scene

the wedding ceremony occurs. In Act IV, Scene i, after Theseus and his hunting party have discovered the sleeping lovers and have learned of Demetrius' convenient change of heart, the Duke maps out the series of events that will follow offstage,

> Theseus — Fair lovers, you are fortunately met.
> Of this discourse we more will hear anon. –
> Egeus, I will overbear your will,
> For in the temple by and by with us
> These couples shall eternally be knit. –
> And, for the morning now is something worn,
> Our purpose hunting shall be set aside.
> Away with us to Athens. Three and three,
> We'll hold a feast in great solemnity. (4.1.174-182)

Theseus' emphasis in this speech on the immediacy of the weddings is not overly surprising given his observation earlier in the scene that the hunting party has conveniently come across the lovers on the day Hermia is to choose among Demetrius, a virginal religious life, or death, which Theseus earlier proclaimed would be on the same day as his own wedding (1.1.83-90). While his choice to go hunting on the morning of his wedding day with his future bride may appear a bit forced, its primary outcome in the structure of the play is to define the time and place of the coming nuptials very specifically, a point which is reinforced by Lysander only a few lines later, "And he bid us follow to the temple" (4.1.193). What is communicated to the audience in this sequence is that the three couples are, immediately after their exits, transitioning into the context of the performative rites that constitute the bonds of marriage, a context that is located specifically in the temple. This threshold scene's implication of immediacy connotes that the next time these couples appear on stage it will either be in the context of the performative, the temple, or at a time after that performative has been executed. The specificity of these future actions is what allows the short narrative break afforded by Bottom's soliloquy at the end of Act IV, Scene i, to effectively collapse time.

In Act IV, Scene ii, a scene that appears at first to follow very fluidly from Bottom's musings about the grandeur of his dream that ends the previous scene, we quickly discover that a meaningful amount of time has passed and that the weddings have already occurred. A handful of 'Rude Mechanicals,' who are searching for Bottom so that they can perform their play as part of the entertainment at the Duke's wedding celebration, are joined by another of their company, Snug the Joiner, about fifteen lines into the scene, who tells them what has transpired,

> Snug — Masters, the Duke is coming from the temple, and there is two or three lords and ladies more married. If our sport had gone forward we had all been made men. (4.2.15-17)

What at first appears to be potentially only minutes of passed virtual time becomes hours. Instead of "Bottom's Dream" being a bridge between scenes, it instead marks a significant and relatively large time jump. Literally, in the passage of thirty lines and a scene break, which could easily be elided in production, we have leapt from the exit of Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius on their way to the temple to all three couples having exited that performative context and completed all the steps necessary to enact three weddings. Bottom's entrance only a few lines later continues to construct a kind of dramaturgical fast-forward:

> Bottom — Not a word of me. All that I will tell you is that the Duke hath dined. Get your apparel together, good strings to your beards, new ribbons to your pumps. Meet presently at the palace; every man look o'er his part. For the short and the long is, our play is preferred. (4.2.29-33)

Again, within the course of only a few lines, time has been compressed. Bottom has not only had time to leave the forest and acquire this knowledge; he has had enough time to gain even more information than Snug could have gleaned, who entered moments before him. Snug's and Bottom's reports, which function similarly to the messenger device in

classical drama, insert a massive amount of exposition in an extremely condensed form. But, in addition, Shakespeare uses them to eliminate the possibility that the performative context will appear on stage. The 'mechanicals' here act as the threshold out of the performative, clearly marking the successful completion of the marriage ritual without ever threatening to restage it.

With the threat posed by the restaged performative context circumvented, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* certainly does not need a restaged cultural performance to literally stand in for the marriage in order to complete its plot. As Stephen Greenblatt, among many others, has noted in his introduction to the play, the resolution to the knot of the lovers' plot is solved long before Act V and in addition is more than slightly problematic:

> The absurdly easy resolution of an apparently hopeless dilemma characterizes not only the lovers' legal but also their emotional condition, a blend of mad confusion and geometric logic that is settled, apparently permanently, with the aid of the fairies' magical love juice. (809)

But what the play-within-the-play that follows does manage to achieve is the construction of an embodied model for viewing the absurdity that has preceded it, while depicting a sequence that carries with it the liminal impact of the absent weddings. While the moments in Act IV denote the thresholds of the unstaged liminal wedding space, the inset play creates an alternative threshold context that carries no performative weight. Instead its potency derives from dramatic efficacy, both in the efficacy that the action in the *meta-locus* has on the staged audience in the *locus*, but also in terms of how that framed and layered moment affects the actual audience. The ridiculous action of the 'metatheatrical' performance, "Pyramus and Thisbe," is intentionally contrasted to the problematic resolution of the lovers' narrative and, through the commentary that the

characters in the *locus* offer, the actual audience is given an example of how to digest the previous action. While Theseus says, "No epilogue, I pray you; for your play needs no excuse. Never excuse" (5.1.340-341), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* manages not only to have a standard epilogue, as given by Puck, but also what is effectively a second extended 'metatheatrical' epilogue that serves almost the same dramaturgical purpose.

From the very beginning of "'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus / And his love Thisbe: very tragical mirth'" (5.1.56-57), the viewer is confronted with the ridiculousness that is one of the potential results of a play that problematically engages with its genre. The tragic narrative of "Pyramus and Thisbe" is constantly undermined by what Bertolt Brecht would almost certainly describe as moments of alienation; Peter Quince's broken Prologue, Snout's explanation of his role as Wall, and Snug's apology for his impersonation of an apparently horrifying lion all not only serve to undermine any potential illusion, but also constantly to derail any flow to the action. Bottom's incredibly over-wrought dialogue compounds with this to eliminate any potential empathy for Pyramus' plight, "O wall, O sweet, O lovely wall" (5.1.172). Of course the end result of this alienation, particularly as it relates to the tragic hero, Pyramus, is that it disrupts, in an Aristotelian sense, any potential tragic catharsis. But instead of the inset play being a complete failure by virtue of its inability to be tragic, it is able to achieve success as both the source and target of humor.

From its very first transition, "Pyramus and Thisbe" inspires as much wit as it possesses absurdity. Once Quince has finished performing the first part of his ill-structured prologue, a number of the assembled newlyweds take the opportunity afforded

by the rest of the company's entrance to mock Quince's apparent mispunctuation or misreading of the punctuation in the text of his speech.

Theseus	This fellow does not stand upon points.
Lysander	He hath rid his prologue like a rough colt: he knows not the stop. A good moral, my lord: it is not enough to speak, but to speak true.
Hippolyta	Indeed, he hath played on the prologue like a child on a recorder – a sound, but not in government.
Theseus	His speech was like a tangled chain – nothing impaired, but all disordered. (5.1.118-125)

Theseus and Lysander begin by engaging in a series of puns predicated on "point" and "stop" both alternatively referring to the piece of punctuation we also refer to as a period.[50] Lysander's transition from "points" to "stop" through the discussion of a horse may also gesture to a pun on the use of the term "point" to refer to the parts of a horse.[51] Hippolyta develops the comic logic by building on Lysander's use of the word "stop" as a term which potentially also refers to the act of blocking the holes of a woodwind instrument. In each case they are displaying the sort of enjoyment that can be derived from the shortcomings of a dramatic text. So when Theseus compares the delivery of the prologue to a knotted chain, we begin to see in him a logic that is more clearly expressed by one of his later comments about the 'Rude Mechanicals' performance: "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them" (5.1.208-209). The "disordered" but "nothing impaired" prologue is the first moment in the inset play in which the virtual audience is given the opportunity to "amend" the amateur company's performance. This correction, housed in wit, serves as a potential model for how the actual audience is meant to handle the potentially troubling nature of

[50] Which Greenblatt notes in his edition (853).

[51] The use of "point" as a part of a horse, according the Oxford English Dictionary, is first referred to in print in 1740, but its root definition, "13 a. A distinguishing mark," comes into use by the 15th century.

Demetrius' enchantment and Theseus' overruling of Egeus' parental authority that the Duke in Act I, Scene i, states he may "by no means extenuate" (1.1.120). In addition, Demetrius and Egeus, through their appearance in Act V, Scene i, partake in this festive entertainment and appear no worse for it.[52] In fact, Demetrius is one of the most active participants in the comic running commentary from the staged audience during "Pyramus and Thisbe," while Egeus organizes the revels of which the inset play is the main attraction. The effect generated by the play-within-the-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, while justified by a need to prevent the presentation of performative utterance on stage, is able to serve a completely different dramaturgical purpose: offering an example for the viewer of how to participate in cleaning up the plot's loose ends.

In addition to the dramaturgical ramification of the play's 'metatheatrical' plot resolution, the play uses these moments to imply that the act of marriage shares these qualities. From the moment that the four lovers enter married in Act V, the audience is never presented with any reason to doubt that the un-staged nuptials will result in long and successful marriages, despite the indicators to the contrary that permeate Acts I through IV. In particular, the wedding ceremony itself, as demonstrated through the action of the play-within-the-play that stands in for it, seems to cement the magical transformation of Demetrius' affections for Helena from an act of enchantment to a ritualistically ordained state. Marriage, even without its appearance on stage, is portrayed in the play as a transformative rite that is able to iron-out the issues that precede it.

The inherent stability created by this concluding cultural performance offers us an interesting counterpoint to the more formally complex navigation of the performativity of marriage in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Unlike *Midsummer*, *Shrew*'s first marriage occurs

[52] This is not true of Egeus in Q; his dialogue in Act V, Scene i, is given by Philostrate.

at almost the exact midpoint of the play and the social ritual that replaces it is drawn out for much of the remaining narrative. Petruccio and Katherine's wedding is not replaced by an easily marked celebration such as the entertainments highlighted by "Pyramus and Thisbe." Instead the play recasts the liminal social performance of husbandry as a replacement for the more rapid ceremonial performative of the wedding. In particular, Shakespeare uses falconry, both with regard to its language and its ritualistic training methods, to replace the play's first wedding with a training process. The singular performative context of the church is replaced with a multiplicity of husbandry performances that have a cumulative effect not dissimilar to the cinematic convention of montage. This collection of 'manning' rites in turn lays the groundwork for the wager during the latter wedding feast that takes the place of the other marriages in the plot.

Discussions of falconry in *The Taming of the Shrew* are certainly not new; there has been a consistent conversation on hawking and marriage in the play since at least the nineteen-seventies.[53] These discussions, which generally focus on how this imagery illuminates the play's position on courtship, do not directly engage with falconry's relationship to the absence of contractual performative utterances including marriage. But what these readings do often support is the idea that the process of taming is in fact a cultural performance. This is usually broached within discussions of the rules or forms of falcon training. Take, for example, Margaret Loftus Ranald's description of the logic behind Petruccio's treatment of Katherine, "Petruchio instinctively knows how to 'man' his haggard as he combines conduct-book rules with those of hawk-taming" (154). This emphasis on the rules present in the taming context is reinforced by more recent critics; Sean Benson, for one, emphasizes the efficacy related to the performance of these acts,

[53] For more information on this conversation see Ranald, Benson, and Ramsey-Kurz.

which he argues points to their inherently inhumane nature: "the falconer deprives her of sleep for days, staying with her around the clock until she conforms to his will. Petruchio follows the form of this practice but distorts its substance" (194). Helga Ramsey-Kurz perhaps states it most explicitly, "For taming in itself is a performance undertaken to coerce further performance" (263).[54]

Though Petruccio's series of form- and rule-driven interactions with Katherine may at first appear rather unlike the self-contained restaged social rituals that have been the focus of this discussion to this point, it is worth mentioning that they are in a number of ways much closer to the rites of passage which serve as the logical jumping-off point for this discussion. As Victor Turner points out in his discussion of an extended coming-of-age ritual described by Arnold van Gennep, "Liminality may involve a complex sequence of episodes in sacred space-time, and may also include subversive and ludic (or playful) events" (Turner *From Ritual to Theatre* 27). Of particular importance in this

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[54] Like many of the other critics who discuss *The Taming of the Shrew* in terms of falconry, Ramsey-Kurz is developing a parallel between the bond between the falcon and falconer and the bond found in marriage, but she carries it a step further. She goes on to relate these connections to the understanding developed between actors in a shared performed fiction, which, while inherently 'metatheatrical' in its formulation, does not address the liminality that develops from the ritual nature of this interaction, "But Kate, he insists, must henceforth play according to a different script. What her part will be in this script seems not yet clear to Petruchio, who, though willing to grant her absolute centrality in it does so with crazed possessiveness" (274). In effect, Ramsey-Kurz argues that falconry, marriage, and acting all involve a kind of social contract, but she never discusses the isolated performative promise that forms that agreement; instead she describes it as an internal realization,

> She [Katherine] comes to comprehend that even more important than the fantasies a dramatic performance may create in the minds of an audience is the agreement between the actors in the moment of that creation: an agreement imperceptible to outsiders and hence invulnerable to catcalls and jeers from the audience, an agreement not part of the official script and therefore able to obey a dynamic of its own; an agreement, finally, developed in privacy prior to a public performance in castings, rehearsals, and fittings. The disturbance of such an agreement during a performance would indeed be like the taming of a wild beast suddenly undone: quite a spectacle but a safely unlikely one and it is for this reason that Petruchio can afford to bet on Katherine's compliance, not as his wife but as his accomplice actress before an audience so given to deception that it has forgotten to think of itself as at all deceivable. (279)

passage is the idea of the social rite as composed of a "complex sequence of episodes;" it does not need to be confined by a single context. On the contrary, it is capable of being constructed by a number of different events connected by a unified logic. And it is that consistent, shared, formally regulated thought process that binds together the episodic structure of Petruccio's invocation of falconry, which allows it to communicate the transformative nature of the avoided nuptial performative.

Much as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the dramaturgical tactics that allow the play to circumvent the staging of Katherine and Petruccio's wedding gracefully begin by clearly defining the thresholds of the marriage rite's performative context. Act III, Scene ii, literally starts with Baptista conspicuously marking the temporal component of that context, "Signor Luccentio, this the 'pointed day / That Katherine and Petruccio should be married, / And yet we hear not of our son-in-law" (3.2.1-3). As the scene ends the audience is given an equally direct reference to the physical location of the context for the ensuing performative.

Tranio	He hath some meaning in his mad attire. We will persuade him, be it possible, To put on better ere he go to church.	[*Exit with GREMIO*]
Baptista	I'll after him, and see the event of this.	*Exeunt* (3.2.117-120)

Baptista, almost as an extension of his role as father of the bride, serves to give us a similar set of stipulations as Theseus does near the end of Act IV, Scene i, in *Midsummer*. In both cases, their dialogue creates the conditional threshold of the liminal performative. In addition to the information that a priest will be present that is communicated by Baptista earlier (3.2.5), Tranio points to the church as the necessary context and Baptista reinforces that he must follow to be sure that he witnesses "the event of this." The

audience knows that there is not a threat of the performative being enacted unless a priest and Baptista, as well as the affianced couple, are present.

Tranio exits at the end of Act III, Scene ii, and almost immediately re-enters to begin the next scene. Shakespeare again gives us a transition between scenes that is deceptive in its handling of the relationship between actual and virtual time in the middle of an act. While editors of the play, such as Greenblatt, often give Tranio a slightly earlier exit in order to delineate the scene break more gracefully, the text itself has him barely leave the stage. It is easy to imagine his beginning to exit and then being stopped by or meeting Lucentio, with whom he begins the next scene, without ever leaving the audience's sight. The rapidness of this transition potentially communicates near-continuous action, but within the first twenty-five lines this apparent continuity is completely disrupted.

Tranio	. . . All for my master's sake, Luccentio. *Enter Gremio* Signor Gremio, came you from church?
Gremio	As willingly as e'er from school.
Tranio	And is the bride and bridegroom coming home?
Gremio	A bridegroom, say you? 'Tis a groom indeed – A grumbling groom, and that the girl shall find. (3.3.21-26)

Much as time is collapsed during "Bottom's Dream," the transition between these two scenes artfully truncates time just long enough to communicate the news that Petruccio and Katherine are married before there is any concern that the performative context might appear on stage. Gremio then goes on to fulfill his role as messenger by expounding on Petruccio's inappropriate actions during the actual marriage ceremony in significant detail. In fact, on three separate occasions during his relation of the wedding, Gremio resorts to citing Petruccio's offstage speech directly, "quoth he" (3.3.33, 38, & 43). As I

mentioned earlier, it is no surprise that Zeffirelli felt a need to stage the sequence; the monologues Shakespeare gives Gremio in this scene border on dialogue and stage directions. Gremio, just as Snug and Bottom in Act IV, Scene ii, of *Midsummer*, constructs the threshold that marks the completion of the offstage performative. This, in turn, allows for the full realization of Petruccio's extended use of the hawk-taming ritual, which replaces the ritual logic of the absent sequence and re-envisions that performative moment's efficacy.

As Ranald points out, the rationale of Petruccio's taming regimen first begins to enter the play before the wedding has occurred, "As early as this moment (III.ii) Petruchio indicates the nature of his taming process: he will deny Kate's wishes while claiming what is in fact the truth – that his motivation is his great love and care for her well-being" (157). While Ranald's position on Petruccio's motivations is certainly debatable, the crux of her position retains its value; Petruccio, from his entrance before the wedding, is enacting a complex ritualized interaction aimed at altering Katherine's behavior. While he does not directly confide in the audience about his actions until his soliloquy at the end of Act IV, Scene i, the audience is given distinct cues that some sort of inverted logic is being employed. As Turner explains, "in liminality people 'play' with elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements" (*From Ritual to Theatre* 27). This explanation of liminality as it is seen in cultural practice very closely corresponds to Petruccio's actions during the scenes that construct the boundaries to the un-staged wedding. Biondello's description of Petruccio's apparel serves as a case in point:

Biondello Why Petruccio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin, a pair of old breeches thrice-turned, a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another laced, an old rusty sword ta'en out of the town armoury with a broken hilt, chapeless, with two broken points,
(3.2.41-45)

None of the pieces of apparel that Petruccio is wearing is particularly odd when taken out of context. Instead they achieve the "novelty" that Turner points to because they are worn together and, more importantly, are being worn by a bridegroom on his wedding day. Tranio sheds some additional light on this moment, "'Tis some odd humour pricks him to this fashion; / Yet oftentimes he goes but mean-apparelled" (3.2.65-66). In other words, none of these garments, though mismatched, individually is completely out of character for Petruccio. Instead, the viewer is lead to believe that the grotesqueness of these trappings is largely contextual. This grotesqueness is also readily apparent in Petruccio's reported behavior during the un-staged wedding ceremony; he is said to have "swore so loud / That all amazed the priest let fall the book, / And as he stooped to again to take it up / This mad-brained bridegroom took him such a cuff / That down fell the priest" (3.3.33-37). Again, cursing and physical violence are certainly not odd behaviors for a male Shakespearean character out of context, but due to their being performed during a religiously charged social ritual, in a church, and toward a priest these familiar actions take on that same "novelty." These inversions, whether in action or appearance, indicate Petruccio's entry into the cultural performance of taming that follows; he is in fact blurring the social rituals which surround the nuptial performative with activities that would be more normal in the context of animal husbandry. His mismatched apparel and behavior roughly fit in the less formal arena of falconry; the play blends his irregular garb into the familiar trappings of the wedding in order to evoke a liminal quality. This is reinforced by the alternate ritual persona that those trappings denote. Petruccio here takes

on the distinctly different countenance of the more mercenary role he inhabits in many of the early scenes of the play. This falconer or trainer persona inhabits the *meta-platea* and allows Petruccio to access the authority associated with the inversion and liminality. The taming ritual that follows is largely structured around Petruccio's construction of this topsy-turvy layer of dramatic representation and his attempts to convince Katherine to accept its conventions. And it is this struggle for authority in this ritualized space that stands in for the nuptial performative and sustains Katherine and Petruccio's interactions for the duration of the third and fourth acts.

This ritualized period of hawk-taming is marked by the falconer's achieving a fine balance between the withholding of certain necessities and communicating a benevolent authority, which during the course of *Taming* to produce dramatic layers that both allow for the omission of the wedding ceremony while still capturing the quality of some of its transformative elements. Petruccio's behavior after his return from the un-staged wedding demonstrates the exact methods that are central to this rite, which modern viewers might recognize anachronistically as Pavlovian conditioning. Petruccio constantly reinforces Katherine's agreement or disagreement with his wishes, statements, and choices by administering positive or negative stimuli, respectively. He perhaps explains it best in his soliloquy on falconry, "My falcon is sharp and passing empty, / And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged, / For then she never looks upon her lure" (4.1.171-173). The falcon, which in this case is directly analogous to Katherine, has had food withheld from her since the wedding. She has been forced to miss the feast that followed the ceremony and Petruccio has kept her from eating once they return to his home in Act IV, Scene i, on the pretense that the mutton was overcooked (4.1.141-156).

In both cases it should also be noted that Katherine either contradicts or questions Petruccio's stated position during the scene in which she is prevented from eating. In Act III, Scene iii, she tries to convince him to stay for the feast and when he refuses she states, "do what thou canst, I will not go today" (3.3.79). And in a similar manner, Petruccio only rails about the quality of the cooking after Katherine has entreated him to be patient after one of the servants dropped a vessel of water (4.1.130-137). In these moments Petruccio is effectively using the "novelty" to construct a ritual persona that inhabits the *meta-platea* and is inviting Katherine to embrace the logic constructed in the inverted space. For all of Act III and the bulk of Act IV Petruccio is waiting for Katherine to "stoop" or acquiesce to the alternative logic he dictates in that liminal dramatic layer. Each opportunity that she is given to defer to his authority by accepting the rules of that space results in resistance, which, in turn translates to Petruccio's continuing to negatively reinforce her behavior. This alternative logic is part of the *meta-platea* that the taming ritual constructs and Petruccio is effectively using the tools of husbandry to coerce Katherine to adopt that dramatic layer's logic. Much like Hieronimo in *Spanish Tragedy*, Petruccio is able to wield absolute control within the *meta-platea*, but unlike Kyd's protagonist, that authority is granted over those who adopt the alternative hegemony of that representational space.

The ritualized and episodic training sequence concludes when Katherine willingly performs an act of absurd obedience. Just as the beginning of the process was highlighted by Petruccio's ritual inversion as seen in his behavior and dress, the rite concludes with Katherine participating in a similarly liminal performance. Her eventual willingness in Act IV, Scene vi, to call the sun the moon not only mirrors the hooding of falcons that is

used to keep them docile,[55] but also indoctrinates her into the alternative reality of the *meta-platea*. She, just like Petruccio, becomes capable of interacting with the primary virtual world of the play, the *locus*, while retaining the ritual authority and "novelty" of the overlaid ritual space. This is demonstrated by their interaction with the old man, Vincentio, whom Petruccio at first addresses as a "Fair lovely maid" (4.6.34). Katherine follows suit by embracing and elaborating this alternative logic that Petruccio has offered by calling Vincentio a "Young budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet" (4.6.38). At this point Petruccio corrects Katherine and they both begin to interact with the old man as normal with Katherine asking his pardon for her odd behavior. At this moment, even more rapidly than the ritual space of the *meta-platea* was constructed, the rite concludes and the dramatic layering collapses. Katherine's choice to "stoop" effectively completes the extended rite and acts as a non-performative analogue for the performative utterance of the wedding ceremony.

The cultural performance that replaces the second set of weddings, those of Lucentio and Bianca as well as Hortensio and the Widow, is a combination of the marriage banquet and the wager of obedience that occurs during it. The connections between this wager and the logic of falconry is a well trodden critical move that Ranald encapsulates nicely,

> Finally in the banquet-wager, Kate is given her real test in flying at a quarry. Even here Petruchio has followed a good falconer's rule, for he has not flown his hawk far on the first occasion, on the road to Padua. Now Kate has a chance at better game, Bianca and the Widow. (161)

The play elegantly constructs the contest around the concept in falconry of reclaim, which Ranald defines as "calling her [the falcon] back to her keeper after she has soared"

[55] For more on this connection between this scene and the hooding of falcons see Benson (191-192).

(159), and is also mentioned by Petruccio, though not by name, "To make her come and know her keeper's call –" (4.1.175). The three husbands, though it may be more appropriate to call them would-be falconers, bet on whose bird will return from flight when summoned. Here the play again uses the logic of hunting and falconry to construct dramatic layering, but the structure of the contest is strikingly different to that of the taming. Instead of the action existing between two layers, the *locus* and *meta-platea*, as it does in the earlier sequence, the wager offers three distinct layers of representation in addition to the potential appearance of Sly and his frame in the *platea*. The audience is given a clear *locus* made up of those that are spectators to the bet, including Tranio and Baptista, in addition to the mediating performance of the wagers and their messengers in the *meta-platea*. The women, who are in effect the primary spectacle of the inset cultural ritual, appear in the *meta-locus*, as their interactions are with the wagers and not with the virtual audience in the *locus*. Here the actual audience sees framed, at least twice over, the end result of the earlier taming rite isolated, observed, and, to some degree, rewarded. Her obedience is celebrated and she is given the opportunity in her monologue regarding a wife's duty to transition into the *meta-platea* in order to shame the other two wives in the *meta-locus*. Katherine's demonstration of her ability to transition between these layers of dramatic representation serves to illustrate the benefits that she has gained by 'stooping' to Petruccio. Unlike the other female characters in this scene, who are unable to exert control over the obedience contest, Katherine's willingness to play Petruccio's game leads to the reward of being granted the authority over that cultural performance. As Katherine points out in her monologue, the Widow and Bianca, because of their unwillingness to engage in the ritual logic set up by their husbands, are no better than

"forward and unable worms" (5.2.173). That lack of potency or importance is directly connected to their lack of domestication. *The Taming of the Shrew* paints a picture of the marriage ritual being a pathway to a limited type of female authority that is granted through a woman's subservience to patriarchal authority. Both of the missing wedding scenes allow the play to demonstrate the transformative potential of this partnership as well as painting a relatively optimistic picture of the limited type of autonomy that is granted to prospective wives.

In both *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew* alternative social rituals structurally replace the nuptial performative once the wedding itself has been completed offstage in order to fashion a relatively positive image of the transformative force that the nuptial ritual generates. Each play also effectively collapses the virtual time around the un-staged ceremony in order to lessen the tension created by the threat of the potential staging of the contractual moment. A number of Shakespeare's later comedies abandon this structure of temporal manipulation and engage with the culturally threatening qualities of the restaged performative more directly.

As You Like It's Nuptial Dodging

One of Shakespeare's comedies that most actively toys with the taboo nature of performative utterance and marriage is *As You Like It*. The play is certainly no exception to what Keith Jones points out in his discussion of *Measure for Measure*, "As in Shakespeare's other comedies, we do not get the marriage rite on stage, but most of the plot is driven by concerns over the rite" (68). In fact, *As You Like It* contains three different sequences that could all easily be seen as setting the stage for the presentation of such a contract: Touchstone's attempt to marry Audrey in Act III, Scene iii, Rosalind and

Orlando's 'mock' marriage in Act IV, Scene i, and Hymen's song in Act V, Scene iv. In each case, the legal and/or religious requirements of marriage are directly referred to and then their practice is either destabilized or averted. None of the three cases clearly results in the formation of a distinct marriage bond; on the contrary, Duke Senior ends Act V by commenting on the fact that all four couples still need to be married, "Proceed, proceed. We'll begin these rites / As we do trust they'll end, in true delights" (5.4.186-187). But what we are given, particularly in the final Act, is a series of restaged cultural performances that serve to fill the void left by the absence of the marriage ceremony itself. These restaged social rituals evoke the ritual tone of the marriages that they stand in for and serve as a capstone for the comic plot. And it is this capping effect, so central to Comedy, that has led to the common misconception that Shakespearean Comedy ends with the main characters getting married. As Lisa Hopkins and others have noted, "The truism that Shakespeare's comedies all end with marriage is not true" (18), but they do often end with a restaged cultural performance that stands in for that marriage.

Act III, Scene iv, of *As You Like It* not only gives us what appears to be the most recognizable potential marriage sequence in the play, but it is also in many ways one of the most problematic. When Sir Oliver Martext enters, his initial response to the situation gives us a glimpse into the complexity and potential confusion generated by early modern English marriage practice.

Martext	Is there none here to give the woman?
Touchstone	I will not take her on gift of any man.
Martext	Truly she must be given or the marriage is not lawful.

(*As You Like It* 3.4.55-58)

Here Martext asserts that a marriage is "not lawful" if it does not follow certain socially prescribed elements, but we are left with the question of what 'lawful' means in this case. If we are to take 'lawful' to mean legally binding in the period, then Martext is completely incorrect. As mentioned above, common-law marriage during the English Renaissance had very few requirements; it constituted an explicit promise between two people. Touchstone and Audrey not only do not need someone to give the bride away in order to get married; they do not even need Martext.

'Lawful' could also mean in keeping with the ceremonial rites outlined by the Church itself, although the early modern Church of England did not consider marriage a sacrament or an exclusively religious act. This is of particular interest because the adjudication of suits regarding marriage was the purview of the church courts in the period, although they were enforcing the same legal definition of marriage that had been defined by precedent and common law. A more formal Church wedding insured that a marriage was much more difficult to challenge legally and thus it was much more 'lawful' in the sense that it would hold up in court. That said, we should not assume that Sir Oliver's approach to marriage would be seen as particularly appropriate. As Brian Jay Corrigan notes, "the clandestined nature of the ceremony – lack of banns, insufficient witnesses – also renders the proposed ceremony illicit" (137). Sokol and Sokol observe that Martext appears to be part of "a marrying industry that supported mainly unbeneficed clergy until 1753, [and] was a scandal of the age" (104).

If we are to take anything away from this scene, it is that using binary opposition to understand early modern English marriage is a distinct oversimplification. As Jacques puts it, when addressing Touchstone later in the scene, "Get you to church and have a

good priest that can tell you what marriage is. This fellow will but join you together as they join wainscot; then one of you will prove a shrunk panel and, like green timber, warp, warp" (3.4.70-73). These comments highlight the idea that there is a perceived gradation within 'legal' marriage, which can at least to some degree be attributed to the quality of the ceremonial elements involved in its performance. Jacques goes so far as to ascribe the quality of the marriage to the skills or craft displayed by the officiant, much as the quality of a house can be attributed to the ability of the builders who constructed it. The logical extrapolation of this is that the kind of 'legal' marriage that is enacted either completely without witness or with the questionable assistance of a less-than-respectable clergyman is the rough equivalent of an amateur marriage. Even though this comment is clearly meant, at least partially, in jest, it does potentially complicate the issue of depicting a comic plot that is meant to culminate in marriage. If a Comedy is meant to end with a happy marriage, how does a play depict that marriage? Solemnization seems to carry with it a value that enhances the quality of the act and thus better fulfills the apparent requirements of the genre, but due to its religiously charged nature, presenting it theatrically in the period would have been effectively prohibited. Shakespeare and his contemporary comic dramatists are faced with an odd generic conundrum: how does a play communicate that its paired couples will execute the ceremony of marriage well without depicting that moment? In the case of this scene, the answer is that the marriage is deferred. Touchstone's choice to take Jacques' council, which leads him to delay his marriage to Audrey, allows the play to begin exploring marriage as a possible outcome of the plot without showing it. In many ways, Act III, Scene iv, serves as a teaser wedding ceremony, and communicates that if clowns have at least a partial understanding of what

constitutes a good marriage, then the romantic protagonists must possess a comparable, if not superior, level of cultural awareness.

The second of these deferred marriage scenes, Act IV, Scene i, not only serves to reinforce the importance of the religious elements of the ceremony and the competence of the officiant, but also acts as a sort of marriage rehearsal, which allows Rosalind to direct Orlando's performance in their assumed future marriage ceremony, potentially guaranteeing his ability to perform the rite correctly. The first of these elements appears when Celia, disguised as Aliena, is asked by Orlando and Rosalind, who is disguised as a boy, Ganymede, who is in turn pretending to be Rosalind, to mock marry them. Celia's response is telling:

Celia	I cannot say the words.
Rosalind	You must begin, 'Will you, Orlando' –
Celia	Go to. Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind? (4.1.109-111)

Celia's dismissal of Rosalind's suggestion that her inability to speak the words is based on her not remembering the language necessary, points to Celia's concern over whether or not those words possess authority when she speaks them. As Hopkins points out, "she can utter them, but in her mouth they have no performative validity" (20).[56] Though other critics have pointed to the possibility that the following marriage scene could possess legal validity if seen as a marriage by proxy or because of language that appears in a later scene,[57] it should be noted that Celia's choice of words here acts as yet another

[56] While Hopkins also argues that the marriages that are pointed to in *As You Like It* are inherently left incomplete, her reading, unlike the one outlined in this chapter, sees them as part of a larger strategy that undermines marriage as an institution: "*As You Like It* does, indeed, then, take marriage as a central theme; but just as the structural patterning of the play resists closure, so does the apparent ideological fixity of the meaning of marriage itself break down under the pressure of the meanings imposed on it by the play" (24).

[57] See Sokol and Sokol 25-26 and Corrigan 139-141.

deferment. When Celia specifies that Orlando is agreeing to marry "*this* Rosalind" (my emphasis) she is divorcing Rosalind's performance of herself, the disguise, from Rosalind's actual self. So while Celia's words do not have the power to sanctify the marriage, they do have the power to qualify the promise that follows. Celia's intervention, much like Jacques' appearance in Act III ,Scene iv, allows the scene to continue without the threat posed by the staging of a religious ceremony. Her disclaimer and functional sabotaging of any grounds, no matter how dubious they already were because of Rosalind's disguise, releases the tension set up by the potential threat of staged religion and continues the deferment of the legal marriage.

Though the scene qualifies and distances the mock marriage it stages, that staging also serves to foreshadow events that the play is unable to stage. Of particular interest is the legal ramifications of Rosalind's instructions to Orlando.

Orlando	I will.
Rosalind	Ay, but when?
Orlando	Why now, as fast as she can marry us.
Rosalind	Then you must say, 'I take thee, Rosalind, for wife.'
Orlando	I take thee, Rosalind, for wife.
Rosalind	I might ask you for your commission; but I do take thee, Orlando, for my husband.

(4.1.112-118)

Here Rosalind pretty clearly instructs Orlando to transfer his *verba de futuro* vow ("I will") to a *verba de praesenti* vow ("I take thee, Rosalind, for wife").[58] In this passage she is not only instructing him in the proper words to make a more binding and more immediate marriage, but yet again undermines the authority of the words that are spoken. Her reference to the need for a commission, much like the references to contracts in *The*

[58] Corrigan 138-140 and Sokol and Sokol 25-26

Taming of the Shrew, call into question the validity of the oral contract by comparison. In this case, that contract has already been heavily discredited by the circumstances of the performative, although it continues that same trend, which rears its head again in Act V.

The play's final scene gives us yet another problematic substitution for the wedding: Hymen's intervention. This time instead of a deferred or mimicked Christian wedding ceremony we are given an either mimicked or supernatural classical union, which is again undermined by the dialogue. Even though Hymen instructs the four couples to "take hands / To join in Hymen's bands" (5.4.117-118), which could constitute handfasting, the Duke still feels the need, as mentioned above, to point out afterward that they still must "begin these rites" (5.4.186). Thus instead of ending with a marriage, the play concludes with Hymen's hymn and the ensuing dance. Both of these social rituals carry with them a ceremonial quality that the play uses to stand in for the marriage rite itself. This substitution of these artistic cultural performances for the religious ritual stabilizes the potentially troubling incomplete marriage ceremonies presented earlier in the play and releases the tension inherent in flirting with the taboo of staging these rituals. There proxy rituals along with the play's preoccupation with setting up the conditions of marriage without allowing for the completion of that marriage, creates a unique type of dramatic layering that is able to destabilize marriage just long enough to reinforce its permanence and transformative force. The repeated toying with marriage structures creates a dramatic illusion that the foreshadowed marriage has been completed, which in turn allows for the use of alternative social rituals that are able to substitute for the presentation of marriage itself and act as a celebratory capstone for the comic plot.

"There is not chastity in language": Dancing Around Marriage in *Much Ado About Nothing*[59]

Much Ado About Nothing takes a slightly different approach to the device of deferred marriage. Unlike *As You Like It*, which relies on clowns and disguise to mitigate the threat of the restaged performative, *Much Ado* takes the avoidance of the marriage ceremony to a logical extreme. Instead of creating contexts that inherently question the effectiveness of the nearly staged performative by evoking a classical context or undermining the circumstances that could lead to the execution of such a performative, the play embraces extremely conventional contexts for the marriage rite. Instead of an inherently destabilized 'green world,' Claudio, Hero, Beatrice, and Benedick literally dance around the legal and religious forms of marriage in scenes that the audience has every reason to believe are occurring in a stately home and a church.

The first of these circumvented performative moments occurs just after the conclusion of the masked dance in Act II, Scene i. Don Pedro has, while masked, just wooed Hero for Claudio and then succeeded in negotiating the match with Leonato offstage: "I have broke with her father and his good will obtained" (2.1.260-261). While these agreements are both mitigated by their circumstances, they do not constitute the marriage performative that seems inevitably to follow. The events in this sequence seem to point to Hero and Claudio engaging in some sort of oral contract: betrothal, handfasting, or some other version of *verba de futuro*. Of course this scene could also end with a *verba de praesenti* agreement that would make any further religious marriage solely a formality. In fact, the momentum of this scene toward that performative moment is so strong that Mary McGlynn argues that it actually occurs, "Claudio and Hero's

[59] (*Much Ado* 4.1.95-96).

spousal meets all the requirements, as well as the important gestures, for validity" (94). The problem with this reading is evident in her own explanation of it: "We do not hear Hero's reply, for she whispers it in Claudio's ear. Beatrice, however, conjectures that Hero 'tells him in his ear that he is / in her heart,' and Claudio agrees that that is exactly what Hero has said" (94-95). The problem with this reading is that the promises they make are not in keeping with the basic requirements of the performative. While both statements appear to be in the present tense, if we assume that Beatrice's interpretation of Hero is accurate, they do not constitute a promise to marry. Claudio says, "Lady, as you are mine, I am yours. I give away myself to you, and dote upon the exchange" (2.1.268-270). This statement is clearly conditional; it is predicated on her giving herself to him, which she does not promise. As far as we can tell she whispers to him, as McGlynn mentions, that "he is / in her heart" (2.1.275-276). This is in fact the very opposite of a performative utterance; it does not *act*, it *describes*. Even if the audience is willing to overlook the issues associated with Hero's statement only being accessible through an intermediary, it does not include a promise to marry in any tense. Here the play dodges the performative at the last possible moment, even drawing out the tension as the audience watches Hero whisper without knowing what she says. Shakespeare, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, shows a confidence with manipulating the conditions and contexts of the nuptial speech act that rachets up the anxiety of its appearance in comparison to his other comedies.

This more aggressive interaction with the wedding is also seen in *Much Ado About Nothing*'s handling of the overtly religious elements of marriage's early modern framework. Even more so than Celia's impersonation of an officiant or Sir Oliver

Martext's appearance in *As You Like It*, Act IV, Scene i, of *Much Ado* invites the audience into the familiar structures of the Christian wedding ceremony. In staging the opening of what Leonato describes as "the plain form of marriage" the scene begins the religious rite without mediation (4.1.1-2). While Claudio almost immediately breaks with the ritual's conventions, which in turn compromises the performative force of the sequence, Leonato's influence keeps the ceremony going and evokes the taboo even more intensely:

Friar	[*to* CLAUDIO] You come hither, my lord, to marry this lady?
Claudio	No.
Leonato	To be married to her. Friar, you come to marry her. (4.1.4-7)

Leonato interprets Claudio's choice to break with the structures of the rite as humorous wordplay. And this decision, while it does not repair the ritual, does allow the ceremony to continue. While Claudio's speech has already given grounds for any performative force derived from the ritual to be questioned, the scene continues to build the tension inherent in the ceremony's progress. The format of the nuptial is finally broken a little over a dozen lines later when Claudio calls off the Friar officiating the event – "Stand thee by, Friar" – but in the intervening lines we have seen both Benedick and Leonato attempt to keep the broken rite going through the use of wit (4.1.21). This scene escalates the tension seen in Act II, Scene i, by not only providing a context in which the enacting of the performative seems logical, but also by beginning the process of constructing the dramatic layering of the formal cultural performance. The dialogue's direct invocations of the forms of Christian marriage, in and of themselves, construct the layers of representation that come from the restaging of cultural performance. The Friar, Claudio, and Hero form the *meta-locus* with the bulk of the staged audience occupying the *locus*

itself. Leonato and Benedick, due to their interventions into the ceremony, serve in the bridging role that is such a standard feature of the *meta-platea*, but unlike a number of other applications of that dramatic layer, these characters do not mediate the taboo impact of the soon-to-be deferred performative ritual. On the contrary, the humor they inject into the sequence prolongs the taboo act and in addition offers the brief possibility that the ritual will be completed incorrectly while still carrying performative force. Neither Benedick nor Leonato seems to see these joking interventions as threatening to the overall execution of the ritual's framework which creates for a matter of lines the potential for an outcome where the virtual world would have to find a way to adjudicate a contract that some in the world of the play held as binding even though its technical requirements had not been met.

The last of the play's avoided marriages is also its most conventional and its least culturally threatening. In the play's final moments, the audience is again confronted by the context and requirements necessary for the religious execution of marriage, but in this case the Friar never actually begins the process. Instead the play again manages some linguistic acrobatics to avoid fulfilling the requirements of either *verba de praesenti* or *verba de futuro*. Before Hero is revealed, Claudio again skirts the act of promising to marry by wording his commitment conditionally, "Give me your hand before this holy friar. / I am your husband if you like of me" (5.4.58-59). His commitment is again predicated on Hero's reply, although this time she does actually respond audibly, "And when I lived I was your other wife; / And when you loved, you were my other husband" (5.4.60-61). She not only avoids responding to the conditional nature of his words; she also completely discusses their relationship in the past tense. Since the common law

requirements of marriage are so expressly described in terms of tense this choice is all the more conspicuous. Hero, whose only other line in the scene centers on her being alive without in any way mentioning her relationship with Claudio, makes no spoken commitment and due to the fact that her first line would probably be combined with the removal of whatever obscures her face, it also unlikely that she even took Claudio's hand when he offered it.

While Claudio and Hero's marriage is the most often circumvented, the potential marriage that walks the finest line with regard to its performative force is between Benedick and Beatrice. After these two are confronted with the written evidence of the other's affection, they humorously agree to marry,

Benedick	A miracle! Here's our hands against our hearts. Come, I will have thee, but by this light, I take thee for pity.
Beatrice	I would not deny you, but by this good day, I yield upon great persuasion, and partly to save your life, for I was told you were in a consumption. (5.4.91-95)

Although one could certainly make the case that the humor of this sequence potentially invalidates the *verba de futuro* agreement that appears to be made, it is also worth considering the complete lack of specificity in their language. Benedick only says that he will "have" her – a word that certainly has a number of other connotations, not the least of which is solely sexual. Beatrice's response, including such phrases as "I would not deny" and "I yield," carries that implication forward. In addition, her line is dominated by the present and past tenses. Any promise that could be inferred from either of their lines is effectively made moot due to the fact that their tenses do not match. "Would" does not carry the weight of 'will' in this context, which allows the play to communicate that agreement has been struck without that agreement bearing the performative force of a

formal oral contract. In addition, Benedick clearly undermines any potential value in those lines with his statement a few lines later, "let's have a dance err we are married" (5.4.112-113). Much like the Duke's line near the end of *As You Like It*, Benedick's comments reinforce the play's lack of investment in the potentially performative interactions that preceded it.

This final moment of union does receive a ritual stand-in unlike the more taboo handlings of marriage earlier in the play. *Much Ado About Nothing* accomplishes this with the staging of a distinctly cultural performance: a dance. Benedick's request for dancing not only clearly communicates the shared ritual logic that stands in for the marriage, but also creates the sort of threshold logic that communicates the inevitability of the marriages that will follow after the staged action concludes and produces the celebratory quality of those inevitable ceremonies. The phrasing "err we are married" and Leonato's clear impatience with the replacing of nuptials with dancing, "We'll have dancing afterward," indicate the unavoidable nature of these unions (5.4.115). Just like Hymen's hymn and its associated dancing in *As You Like It*, the dance here brings with it the ceremonial quality necessary to communicate comic closure and that serves to cap the plot's resolution, while also stabilizing all of the tension created by the incomplete exploration of the play's incomplete treatments of the marriage ceremony itself.

While *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* do not represent an exhaustive study of Shakespeare's comic works, the similarities in their handling of marriage are certainly worth noting. Though the importance of marriage to Shakespeare's Comedy and the absence of its staging are critical commonplaces, that makes it all the more important to consider how

those issues are handled by each play's structure. These genre-specific strategies, which are built on the use of restaged cultural performances and their resulting dramatic layers, capture and celebrate the ceremonial qualities of marriage as they effectively obfuscate the performative efficacy of the nuptial. This, in turn, offers Shakespeare the opportunity to manipulate and toy with the expectations of his viewers as these plays delve into the cultural prohibitions associated with restaging the marriage ritual itself. And, it is this set of tactics that allows these plays to evoke the taboo nature of the staging of performativity for the purpose of developing a unique kind of comedic tension.

CHAPTER 4

CONJURING EFFICACY: READING THE PERFORMATIVE RESTAGING OF RELIGION, THEATRE, AND MAGIC IN *THE TRAGICAL HISTORY OF DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

Robin: . . . *Polypragmos Belseborams framanto tostu Mephistopheles!* etc.

Enter to them Mephistopheles.
[*Exit the Vintner, running.*]

Mephistopheles: Monarch of hell, under whose black survey
Great potentates do kneel with awful fear,
Upon whose altars thousand souls do lie,
How am I vexed with these villians' charms!
From Constantinople am I hither come
Only for the pleasure of these damned slaves. (Marlowe 3.2.27-34)[60]

In Act III, Scene ii, of *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, the play presents us with something odd: an apparently illiterate character who manages to summon a devil by 'reading' a spell. That is not to say that Robin successfully conjures Mephistopheles, but Mephistopheles certainly does appear. Here, in this moment of comic relief, *Doctor Faustus* begins to complicate any clear-cut reading that attempts to simplistically describe the mechanics that govern magic within the world of the play. The scene begins with Robin and Rafe having just left a tavern where they have stolen a goblet. The Vintner from said establishment confronts them and they deny having stolen anything. He searches them, which leads to Robin and Rafe comically concealing the cup through a bit of legerdemain. When the Vintner, frustrated that he cannot find the vessel, accuses them more directly, Robin resorts to conjuring in an attempt to punish the Vintner for questioning his honesty. Robin's access to this magical knowledge is justified in the previous act when he tells the audience that, "I ha' stol'n one of Doctor Faustus'

[60] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from *Doctor Faustus* come from the 1604 A-text.

conjuring books, and, i'faith, I mean to search some circles for my own use" (2.2.2-3). Yet, as Rafe immediately points out and the play reinforces, there are significant reasons to doubt whether Robin actually has the ability to read the book (2.2.15-16). Robin's spell is clearly delivered incorrectly. The words he uses are not even all in the same language and they certainly do not add up to a coherent sentence. But, strikingly, his gibberish does summon a devil. And, Mephistopheles even admits that Robin's "charms" had a direct effect on him. That said, unlike Faustus or Wagner, who earlier both successfully conjure devils and successfully control those devils, Robin's spell only succeeds in the former. The frustrated Mephistopheles almost immediately transforms Robin and Rafe into an ape and a dog, respectively. While *Doctor Faustus* certainly gives us a number of moments that exemplify the failure of magical, religious, and theatrical formulas to have efficacy within the world of the play, this example stands out as a moment that partially succeeds. How does the potential for partial efficacy affect our understanding of the world described in *Doctor Faustus*? And, perhaps more importantly, how does this potential spectrum of performative outcome challenge our assumptions about how the early modern English audience understood its relationship both to the play and to the events it describes?

Much as Shakespeare confronts the issues attached to the restaging of the marriage ceremony in the comedies discussed in Chapter 3, Marlowe, in *Doctor Faustus*, interrogates the mechanics of religiously charged cultural performances and their efficacy more generally. In particular, this play invites the audience to compare the structural similarities present in three distinctive modes of Christian performativity: magical ceremony, theological rite, and the ritual logic outlined in the dramaturgical conventions

found in the Morality Play genre. Marlowe's play, unlike most dramatic works that stage magic in general or conjuring specifically, highlights the similarities among these magical, religious, and dramatic formulas. *Doctor Faustus* presents examples of how all three of these seemingly distinct sources of blueprints for performative language serve as the basis for misplaced belief. Misplaced, not because these sources lack efficacy, but instead because that efficacy is not as simplistic or mechanical as it may appear. The world of *Doctor Faustus* serves as a crucible in which thaumaturgical,[61] liturgical, and dramaturgical models are examined and largely collapsed into a single, uniquely discursive model for early modern performative efficacy. Faustus' own missteps in his attempts to evoke these performative formulas give the modern reader a foundation on which to begin evaluating the differences between our contemporary linguistic models for performative language and the one that is effectively put forth in Marlowe's text. To put it simply, for the world of *Doctor Faustus*, the acts that words carry out derive their power from sources beyond cultural precedent, which in turn changes the speech act's associated requirements. It is this structure of performative logic, based as much on internal state and intentionality as on externalized performance, that allows for the partial efficacy that the play manifests. And it is that blending of the importance of inner and outer conditions that permeates both *Doctor Faustus*' staging of inherently magical acts and the play's treatment of performative situations that derive from the Morality Play tradition and religious ritual. It is the possibility of partial efficacy, along with the failure of many culturally ingrained religious and Morality Play tropes, that constructs the play's complex treatment of performative language. These strategies act to destabilize

[61] "Thaumaturgic . . . A. adj. 1. That works, or has the power of working, miracles or marvels; wonder-working" (OED).

traditional models of performative faith and would have challenged early modern audience members to reevaluate their assumptions about the practice of personal religious devotion.

While there is critical disagreement about whether or not the magical logic of *Doctor Faustus* possesses an internal consistency, there is good reason to believe that the magical speech acts found in the text are all playing by roughly the same set of rules. It is understandably easy to assume the opposite: that the magic that Robin performs in the comic sub-plot has little to no bearing on the conjuring central to the main tragic plot. But that position seems to have developed more from *Doctor Faustus*' textual issues than any failing in the play's earliest extant edition, the A-text (1604). The longer and more muddled B-text (1616), which has been used as the copy-text or as the basis for a conflated version of the play in many modern editions, certainly reinforces the sort of inconsistency that would lead to a dismissal of any logical framework for magical efficacy.[62] As Michael H. Keefer eloquently puts it, "in one important respect – its handling of verbal magic – the B-version is fundamentally incoherent" (325). For this reason, only the A-text (1604) has been used in the formation of this analysis.

Doctor Faustus and the Performative Discourse

The current discourse on performative language in *Doctor Faustus* is inextricably bound to the absolute efficacy of language; critics tend to argue that performative language is either efficacious or not efficacious. The difficulty with this approach is that it is too invested in polarized readings instead of seeing how the strengths of those readings interact. Marlowe's play is not about drawing hard, dogmatic lines. *Doctor*

[62] For more a more complete discussion of this issue, see Michael Keefer's "Verbal Magic and the Problem of the A and B Texts of *Doctor Faustus*."

Faustus is far more interested in blurring distinctions and creating ambiguity than constructing or reinforcing orthodoxy. The world of the play does not reflect any one accepted early modern worldview; the play constructs its own. In order to bridge this divided discourse it is necessary to find a middle ground that is consistently supported by the play's text. This synthesis requires a close examination of these critics' approaches to performative language and its relationship to magical, religious, and theatrical efficacy.

A number of recent scholars have approached the mechanics of magical language in *Doctor Faustus* by evoking J. L. Austin's work on performative language. For Austin, who originally coined the term 'performative' in his second lecture in *How to Do Things with Words*, performatives are utterances that "have on the face of them the look – or at least the grammatical make-up of 'statements'; but nevertheless they are seen, when more closely inspected, to be, quite plainly, *not* utterances which could be 'true' or 'false'" (Austin 12). While this idea has been expanded to discuss all sorts of social constructions, at its core it refers to speech that is interpreted as action. Austin uses the utterance 'I do' from the western marriage ceremony as his central example of a speech act, "the act of marrying, like, say, the act of betting, is at least *preferably* (though still not *accurately*) to be described as *saying certain words*, rather than as performing a different, inward and spiritual, action of which these words are merely the outward and audible sign" (Austin 13). Austin goes on to address a number of different ways in which performatives can be, as he puts it, 'unhappy.' While a 'happy' performative is effectively successful because it has fulfilled the 'letter' and the 'spirit' of the act, 'unhappy' performatives fail in one or both of these areas.[63] Austin labels these incomplete uses of performatives as 'infelicities'

[63] The use of the 'letter' vs. 'spirit' opposition is mine and not Austin's. I have included this terminology in an attempt to more clearly express Austin's ideas.

and breaks them into two groups: 'misfires' (in which the infelicity directly voids the performative, or in other words a performative that transgresses the 'letter' of the act) and 'abuses' (in which the infelicity leads to a successful but hollow completion of the performative, or in other words a performative that transgresses the 'spirit' of the act) (Austin 12-17).

This model forms the basis for Andrew Sofer's argument that performative language in *Doctor Faustus* has absolute efficacy on the stage and potentially off it. Sofer builds directly on Austin's framework, but accurately observes that magical language in *Doctor Faustus* challenges Austin's definition of performative 'misfires.' Sofer's argument claims that magic's efficacy is not necessarily made void by a certain context, in particular the context of theatrical performance, which Austin effectively sees as an empty quotation of a performative. As Sofer puts it, "Austin's distinction [between 'happy' performatives and theatre's 'unhappy' restaging of them] breaks down whenever a speech act in the world of the play makes a material difference in the world of the playhouse" (3). His case in point for this is that there is a threat that the act of conjuring on stage could carry with it the possibility for an English Renaissance audience of actually succeeding in the summoning of a real demon in the playhouse. Sofer's position is that the play's power in performance derives directly from the potential accidental power of performative words uttered on the public stage:

> To hold the position that Faustus's magic spells do not really work, and that the play thus denies the very possibility of magic, is to slight the play's certified power to terrify Elizabethan audiences *even as it entertained them*. (Sofer 21)

Sofer is certainly correct in pointing out that the supposed appearance of extra devils on stage is an important part of *Doctor Faustus*' reception in performance and that Austin's distinctions between performed speech and performative speech acts break down,

particularly in this context. However, his reading does not map easily onto Robin's conjuring of Mephistopheles.

Just before Sofer briefly discusses Act III, Scene ii, he acknowledges the potentially contradictory nature of the play's conjuring logic. When discussing Mephistopheles' first appearance in Act I, Scene ii, and that demon's assertion that Faustus' spell only summoned Mephistopheles incidentally, Sofer's first potential reading of that scene does not seem to match up with Robin's conjuring:

> . . . the disingenuous Mephistopheles may have had no choice but to appear once the magical formula is uttered. This would seem to accord with widespread popular beliefs regarding the magical efficacy of spells (and with the clowns' later conjuring of an irate Mephistopheles in act 3, scene 2). (14)

Sofer gives a number of other possible readings, but his conclusion appears to be that "*Something* has conjured Mephistopheles onstage, but it is very difficult to locate any agent behind the act other than the playwright's dialogue" (15). The difficulty with this reading is that calling the dialogue that Robin utters a spell seems a bit dubious. David Riggs, in his biography of Marlowe, describes 'black' magic as taking place when a "practitioner employed talismans, symbolic utterance or ritual practices in order to operate a demon (spirit, intelligence or demi-god) that embodied an occult force" (176-177). Robin's spouting of Greek and Latin nonsense does not really seem to fit into any of those categories. One might come to the conclusion that speaking Mephistopheles' name is in and of itself the spell, since that is the only commonality between Faustus' and Robin's conjuring, but Faustus speaks Mephistopheles' name a number of times in the fifth act without him appearing. One could also come to the conclusion that Mephistopheles' name must be spoken in a Latin context, but considering Mephistopheles' own words on the subject (1.3.47-55) and the fact that Wagner

summons Balioll and Belcher by speaking their names in English and then refers to them again by name later in the scene without them appearing (1.4.45-71), it seems unlikely. Either way, Sofer's model of performativity does not allow for partial success, so even if one were able to justify that Robin had completed the spell correctly, it would be equally difficult to explain why it only worked partially.

On the other side of this discussion, Daniel Gates makes the case that *Doctor Faustus* espouses the hollowness of language. Gates compares the story of *Faustus* to the historical accounts of the life of Francesco Spiera, a Protestant who renounced his faith in 1548 while under trial in Venice by the Inquisition. According to Gates, unlike Faustus, whose words do not have power unto themselves, Spiera's insincere conversion has very real ramifications:

> His [Spiera's] unpardonable sin is a classic instance of a profoundly infelicitous speech act: words he utters insincerely, with the intention only of extricating himself from danger, turn out to have an uncanny ability to damn him. (Gates par. 3)

This "terrifying power of performative language" (Gates par. 5) that Gates sees in the Spiera story is certainly at odds with *Doctor Faustus*' use of performativity. Gates makes the astute observation that Faustus' pledge to give his soul to Lucifer, "appears on closer examination not to have such extra ordinary power . . . Marlowe underscores that even this instance of performative language actually depends on Faustus' own continual submission" (par. 32). That said, it seems difficult to divorce efficacy, whether magical or religious, from performative language in the play, as Gates does. His point is largely built around the apparent permanence of Spiera's damnation based on a single speech act. In *Faustus* this sort of efficacy is certainly not the norm, but that is not to say that Robin's 'charms' should be ignored. When Gates suggests, "Doctor Faustus is a cautionary tale against credulously trusting that speech acts do have a supernatural

power" (par. 34), he is right to question that efficacy, but should be careful not to discount it because of its apparent lack of permanence.

While these readings make excellent points about the nature of performative language in *Doctor Faustus*, they are each limited by their adherence to Austin's notion of performativity. Since both posit that the efficacy of supernatural performative utterances in *Doctor Faustus* must be evaluated by the basic rules of performativity that J. L. Austin outlines, neither explores the possibility that Marlowe's understanding of performative language differs from Austin's in its basic assumptions. Is it particularly useful to attempt to understand a late 16th-century play by applying an unmediated 20th-century linguistic theory? Is this argument one that can be understood by divorcing performative acts from internal states? It is more useful to look at the impact of performative language on the divine and diabolical in *Doctor Faustus* by interrogating the early modern theological ramifications of performatives, whether magical, religious, or theatrical in nature that appear in Marlowe's play.

In order to analyze these performative moments, it is also important to note that they are not limited to the magical in *Doctor Faustus*. While conjuring is undoubtedly the most central and discussed type of performativity in the play, Faustus' rehearsal of the Morality Play tradition is at least as prevalent. The critical conversation has certainly discussed the importance of medieval theatrical conventions in *Doctor Faustus*, with Bevington going so far as to say that *Doctor Faustus* is the "crowning achievement of Psychomachia drama" (Bevington 245) and "a vital fusion of secular subject and traditional form, [which] began an era of incomparable drama that was . . . both secular and moral" (Bevington 262). This said, the relationship between the performative

conjuring sequences and the inherently performative nature of Faustus' citational interaction with Morality Play tropes has the potential to offer a new approach, one that asserts that Marlowe is injecting a marked medieval theatrical style of communication into his otherwise distinctly early modern approach to characterization in order to explore the unmarked performance of religious belief. This, in turn, unhinges the ways in which the more traditional 'overreacher' model, put forth by Harry Levin, or Greenblatt's 'absolute play' model of Marlowe's work map onto *Doctor Faustus*.[64] The relationship between magical performatives and the tropes of the Morality Play illuminates the fact that performativity functions by rules that defy the boundaries in Austin's categorization. The blurred line between the presentation of the theatrical, particularly those dramatic structures found in Morality Play, and the use of magic within the world of the play serves to add additional depth to the play's interest in the potential connection between the logic of prayer and the logic of conjuring. This connection begins to demonstrate the play's position on the potential efficacy of theatrical tropes on the divine. When Faustus' interactions with the basic formula of Morality Play are evaluated alongside his use of thaumaturgy and the play's interaction with liturgical practice, the play paints a much clearer picture of the kind of speech acts that have efficacy within Marlowe's work. This highlights that Faustus' own performative infelicities provide a foundation on which to evaluate the differences between Austin's performative model and the one that Marlowe's text constructs. Magical rituals and Morality Play tropes lose at least some of their efficacy within the world of the play during performative abuses and misfires, as

[64] See Harry Levin's *The Overreacher, A Study of Christopher Marlowe* and Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, pg. 193-221.

does faith when it is unassisted by a performative. In fact, Marlowe seems to be imagining a world in which only 'happy,' authentic language has its intended effect.

The Conjuring of Prayer

As Keith Thomas points out, it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that the accepted intellectual model in England began "moving over from the animistic universe to a mechanical one" (225-226). Marlowe's play was not being written for an audience that shared our mechanistic understanding of language or even separated language from intention; on the contrary, as Ramie Targoff convincingly argues, Elizabethan and Jacobean culture was preoccupied by the connection between inward belief and its outward show. As she points out, "the assurance of Catholic recusants and Puritan resistors that God would privilege their private beliefs over their fraudulent public conformity conflict with a dominant ecclesiastical culture that denied the worshipper's capacity to prevent the internalization of external devotion" (51). The pre-mechanistic cultural mindset from which *Doctor Faustus* emerges would find it difficult to conceive of a model for performative efficacy that, like Austin's model, denies the importance of the speaker's internal state to achieving an intended effect. And, while this connection is certainly central to the play's handling of theatrical and magical efficacy, *Doctor Faustus* most clearly highlights its significance through its presentation of religious performatives.

This emphasis on the importance of both internal and external success for the efficacy of a performative is illustrated in *Doctor Faustus*' presentation of two distinct poles with regard to the spectrum of religious devotion, as well as the spectrum of citational performativity: the Pope and the Old Man. The Pope's faith, as it is portrayed

in the play, is highly performative and highly infelicitous. He activates what seem to be perfectly appropriate performative rituals, but his internal state, his lack of faith, makes his acts fall within the realm of performative abuses. In Act III, Scene i, of *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus, who Mephistopheles has made invisible, spies on and torments the Pope and his friars, who respond by attempting to exorcise Faustus with two distinct ritual performatives that function in a very similar manner to Faustus' magical performatives. The first occurs when the Pope crosses himself.

> Pope: . . . Friars, prepare a dirge to lay the fury of this ghost. Once again, my lord, fall to.
>
> *The Pope crosseth himself.*
>
> Faustus: What, are you crossing yourself? Well, use that trick no more, I would advise you.
>
> *[The Pope] cross[es himself] again.*
>
> Well, there's a second time. Aware the third, I give you fair warning.
>
> *[The Pope] cross[es himself] again, and Faustus hits him a box of the ear, and they all run away.* (3.1.75-81)

While it is true that the Pope's words do not constitute a performative, his gestures do, specifically in this case a performative abuse, which the Pope believes will be efficacious due in part to his socio-religious position. Though the gesture of crossing oneself is meant to act as an outward sign of an internal faith, a faith that would presumably protect the Pope from the influence of devilish things, it has absolutely no effect on Faustus who in fact finds the Pope's hollow gestures irritating. Faustus goes so far as to describe the gesture as a 'trick,' which seems to reiterate one of Faustus' original objections to the Church, "Such is the subject of the Institute / And universal body of the Church. / His study fits a mercenary drudge / Who aims at nothing but external trash –" (Marlowe 1.1.32-35). The Church and consequently the Pope and his friars, as the only direct

representatives of organized religion in the play, are both linked to the idea of hollow external rituals, which are analogous to performative abuses.

Marlowe goes on to reinforce this condemnation of the Church by showing the ineptness of the friars in the second of the two performatives in Act III, Scene i. This incompetence is set up at the beginning of the scene when Mephistopheles entreats Faustus to pay a visit to the papal court.

> Mephistopheles: Nay, Faustus, stay. I know you'd fain see the Pope
> And take some part of holy Peter's feast,
> Where thou shalt see a troupe of bald-pate friars
> Whose *summum bonum*[65] is in belly cheer.
> (3.1.50-53)

Here Mephistopheles is using religious terminology to mock the inauthentic religious practices of the Pope and his friars. He implies that they have confused the limitless beneficence of God with physical pleasure, in this case specifically with the gratification found in food and drink. Later in the scene, the Pope's call for a 'dirge' results in the friars reentering to famously curse Faustus and Mephistopheles "with bell, book, and candle" (Marlowe 3.1.82-83), but the friars, although their performance does construct a *meta-locus*, do not engage in the correct ritual. Instead of initiating a ritual exorcism to drive off the ghost or spirit they assume is tormenting them, the friars begin to chant "Maledicat Dominus," which comes from the excommunication ceremony (Logeman 82-83). In this case the friars' performative has misfired even though it has succeeded as a cultural performance in creating a new dramatic layer. They are using the wrong ritual and thus the performative is never given a chance to have its intended effect. It should be noted that their intention to exorcise Faustus and Mephistopheles, which should be separated from a necessary internal state of faith, has no effect either. In these two uses of

[65] "summum bonum] greatest good – a scholastic term that defines the infinite goodness of God" (Bevington & Rasmussen 164)

performatives, Marlowe is reinforcing that the representatives of the institutionalized Church are unable to access authentic faith either because of their dependence on performatives or because of their inability to appreciate the necessary ingredients required to make the performative function correctly and authentically.

The Old Man, on the other hand, occupies the opposite pole of the spectrum. The practical application of his faith does not rely on performative measures; the Old Man lacks access to citational, culturally accepted formulas that allow him to engage in religious speech acts. His faith is in fact self-evident and perceivable without any active exteriorization. But, despite the apparent power of his faith, it alone does not grant him power to control or repel the demonic. When Faustus asks Mephistopheles to torment the Old Man, Mephistopheles responds, "His faith is great. I cannot touch his soul" (Marlowe 5.1.76). This palpable connection to the divine is reiterated as Mephistopheles and his devils attempt to torment the Old Man's body. When the devils appear and try to harm the Old Man, he responds:

> Old Man: Satan begins to sift me with his pride.
> As in this furnace God shall try my faith,
> My faith, vile hell, shall triumph over thee.
> Ambitious fiends, see how the heavens smiles
> At your repulse and laughs your state to scorn!
> Hence, hell! For hence I fly unto my God.
> (5.1.114-119)

In the above lines we see the Old Man narrate the effects of his unmediated faith, which is unable to prevent his death. And while his words evoke scripture,[66] he never cries out for divine intervention nor does he ever manage to occupy an alternative dramatic layer, whether in the *meta-platea* or *meta-locus*, through the evocation of cultural performance. Instead he maintains his defiance of demonic forces and suffers in order to keep his

[66] Psalms ii.4.

external self in accordance with his internal faith. The Old Man does not need to pray or call out for assistance in order to be saved; his authentic faith has an effect independent of performative expression. But his faith lacks the efficacy of a performative that is both completed correctly and coupled with the appropriate internal state. He is safe from any attack on his soul, but his faith is unable to save his physical body. The Old Man's unmediated faith does not have the power to protect his flesh from the diabolical or give him control over the actions of the demons that torment him.

The Old Man never attempts to access the sort of divine conjuring that Eamon Duffy so thoroughly describes in his analysis of spell-like prayers found in pre-English Reformation *Horae*, which would, if restaged, result in dramatic layering. In his discussion of prayers that literally call on God and the Angels to protect the speaker from both worldly and demonic enemies, Duffy points out:

> . . . it would be a mistake to see even these "magical" prayers as standing altogether outside of the framework of the official worship and teaching of the Church. The world-view they enshrined, in which humanity was beleaguered by hostile troops of devils seeking the destruction of body and soul, and to which the appropriate and guaranteed antidote was the incantatory or manual invocation of the cross or names of Christ, is not a construct of the folk imagination. (279)

While this Catholic logic was certainly not a mainstay of the Protestant religious climate that made up the mainstream when *Doctor Faustus* was written, its influence is difficult to ignore. *Doctor Faustus* is littered with moments of "incantatory and manual invocation" both religious and magical, correctly performed and horribly abused. The ineffectiveness of the Pope's and his friars' performatives, as well as the relative powerlessness of the Old Man, highlights just how central the connection between citational ceremony and appropriate internal state is for the world of the play.

Even the Old Man's advice to Faustus earlier in the scene focuses on the importance of the interior state as it relates to exterior performative expression.

> Old Man: Break heart, drop blood, and mingle it with tears –
> Tears falling from repentant heaviness
> Of thy most vile and loathsome filthiness,
> The stench whereof corrupts the inward soul
> With such flagitious crimes of heinous sins
> As no commiseration may expel
> But mercy,
> (5.1.40-46)

The Old Man's words describe the same sort of duality that Austin perceives in the performative. The act of repentance must reflect an interior 'heaviness,' without which access to mercy is impossible. But, it also appears that the physical acts (the dropping of blood and weeping) are necessary components. What the Old Man points out is that a religiously charged performative's success is at least partially dependent upon the inward intention, which is perceivable to both the divine and the diabolical. Thus in the world of *Doctor Faustus* the illusion of efficacy in performative abuses is potentially a trap connected to society's investment in ritual as an expression of religious authority. These cultural performances alone are incomplete without the appropriate internal thoughts, feelings, and/or beliefs. Cultural performance within the world of the play is in effect the theological equivalent of an unloaded gun.

The play's emphasis on the synergy between internal state and citational performative utterance is most clearly embodied in Faustus' initial conjuring of Mephistopheles in Act I, Scene iii. This scene stages the most efficacious performative utterance in the play: Faustus demonstrating an extreme level of control over Mephistopheles (from the conjuring itself to making Mephistopheles change form). But even here, Mephistopheles makes sure to remind the audience that Faustus' success is at least partially based on the internal state that is displayed in Act I, Scene i. When Faustus

asks Mephistopheles whether Faustus' speech did the conjuring, Mephistopheles gives him this answer:

> Mephistopheles: That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*.
> For when we hear one rack the name of God,
> Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ,
> We fly in hope to get his glorious soul,
> Nor will we come unless he use such means
> Whereby he is in danger to be damned.
> (1.3.47-52)

The performative is the cause of the 'conjuring,' but it was only important insofar as the performative attracted Mephistopheles' attention and communicated Faustus' potential for damnation. *Per accidens* invokes a critical distinction "between agents that produce their own effect (efficient cause) and happenings that merely provide the occasion for the operation of some external agency (*per accidens*)" (Bevington & Rasmussen 128). This separation is at the very heart of the performative logic of *Doctor Faustus*. Sofer describes this distinction by evoking Austin's concept of perlocution (which can be roughly defined as 'persuasion') and illocution (roughly 'ordering'). The primary difference between these concepts for both Sofer and Austin is that illocution has a directed and predictable outcome, while perlocution does not (Sofer 15 and Austin 109-112). Sofer claims that magic in *Doctor Faustus* is perlocutionary and the caster of the spell does not have control over the spell's outcome, only over the fact that there will be an outcome. But while *Doctor Faustus*' magical logic certainly has perlocutionary qualities, it merges them with a connection between persuasion and internal state. Magic in the play is not efficacious in and of itself. The ritual language of thaumaturgy in the play is in fact motivated by an internal state (in the case of *Doctor Faustus*, either faith, a sort of anti-faith, or a potential for damnation) that invites the divine or the diabolical to act. This is reinforced by the fact that Faustus is never able to do magic independently of

Mephistopheles. All of Faustus' little tricks, from becoming invisible to making horns grow out of a man's head, are in fact done by Mephistopheles at Faustus' request. Faustus thinks that he exerts power over the supernatural, when in truth the only performative that he has participated in that has any real efficacy in the world of the play is inviting Mephistopheles to present himself. Faustus' misplaced belief in the power of his speech acts and the control over Mephistopheles that they supposedly grant him makes Faustus an easy mark for the diabolical forces present in the play, who use Faustus' own misunderstanding as a weapon against him.

The limitations of religiously charged performatives in the play are reinforced by the contract that Faustus writes and signs in Act II, Scene i. Mephistopheles tells Faustus that he must "write a deed of gift with [his] own blood, / For that security craves great Lucifer" (2.1.35-36). While Mephistopheles certainly wants Faustus to believe that this contract is binding, the devils in the play clearly do not trust the potency of the agreement. After Faustus signs the deed, he notices that an inscription has appeared on his arm: "*Homo fuge*!"[67] (2.1.77). To which he responds, "Whither should I fly? / If unto God, he'll throw thee down to hell" (2.1.77-78). Here, Faustus demonstrates that he believes the deal he has made is binding, and that even God must observe it. Mephistopheles, on the other hand, does not have that level of confidence in the paper's efficacy. Upon noticing that Faustus is concerned by the writing on his arm, Mephistopheles initiates a distraction. He tells the audience that he'll "fetch [Faustus] somewhat to delight his mind" (2.1.82). At this devils appear and begin to lavish rich clothing on Faustus. Mephistopheles knows that he needs to keep Faustus' mind occupied so that he does not have time to reflect on his own damnation. And it is that series of

[67] "Homo fuge!] 'Fly, O man!' (I Timothy vi.II)" (Bevington & Rasmussen142).

diversions that makes up the rest of the play's main narrative. Every time Faustus begins to make headway toward developing either some form of faith or some more complex understanding of the state of his soul, Mephistopheles shows up and creates a distraction. The overwhelming importance of these diversions to Mephistopheles reinforces the contract's lack of efficacy.

The most damning evidence that the contract Faustus signs does not bind him is that he signs a second document. After the Old Man talks Faustus out of committing suicide in Act V, Scene i, Faustus appears to be as close as he ever gets to truly repenting. Then Mephistopheles appears and threatens to physically harm Faustus. He defers to and offers to reassert his commitment to the diabolical by drafting a new document, again in his own blood. Mephistopheles responds to this by saying "Do it quickly with unfeigned heart," (Marlowe 5.1.74). Mephistopheles is aware that the only way to keep Faustus' soul from being saved is to keep Faustus' internal state faithless. The contract serves as a ruse, a device that Faustus believes has power. His misplaced belief that the performative act has power unto itself becomes a restraint that Mephistopheles is able to use to manipulate Faustus. Faustus' confidence in the power he believes resides in the performatives, whose mechanical aspects he has mastered, makes him, like the Pope and his friars, helpless in the face of demonic forces.

The Morality Play as Religious Performative

Faustus' clearly incomplete understanding of the implications and nuances of performative utterance are not limited to magical endeavors. This is most clearly demonstrated in Faustus' interaction with the tropes of Morality Play, which he utilizes in an attempt to affect his own salvation. Just as with the magical performative formulas

that Faustus interacts with in the play, these dramaturgical and religiously charged tropes are carried out mechanically in order to complete the arc of the Morality Play plot. Faustus clearly goes through the motions of the genre in exactly the same way that the character of the Pope goes through the motions of religious devotion in Act III, Scene i. Faustus buys into the ceremonial trappings of Morality Play's pre-Reformation religious roots, but misses the internal state of faith that the genre clearly means to demonstrate. The Morality Play structure becomes analogous to an elaborate spell-like ritual that Faustus attempts to cast over the course of the entire dramatic narrative.

The first of these Morality Play structures, and perhaps the most famous, is the exteriorization of internal conflict common to many psychomachiae: the Good Angel and the Bad Angel. In order to put Marlowe's use of this trope in perspective, it seems reasonable to place it in contrast to the earliest extant English Morality Play: *The Castle of Perseverance*. The Good and Bad Angels appear prominently in *Castle of Perseverance*, but the way they are used is quite different from the way Marlowe uses them in *Doctor Faustus*. *Castle of Perseverance* devotes 154 of the first 299 lines of the play's body to Mankind's temptation personified by the Good and Bad Angels. While the Good and Bad Angels do not speak all of these lines, they do utter far more than the eight lines they receive in their Act I, Scene i, appearance in *Doctor Faustus*. Mankind spends a great deal of time actively weighing his options, culminating in his decision; Faustus, conversely, does not seem to engage completely with the Angels' statements. Mankind uses this symbolic exteriorized conversation to consider his decision:

Mankind: Whom to follow, ye or ye!
I stand and study, begin to rave.
I would be rich in great array –
But yet I would my soul to save:
As wind on the water I wave.

(Turns to the Bad Angel)
Thou wouldst I to the World me took –
(Turns to the Good Angel)
And he would that I it forsook.
Now, so God me help and the holy book,
I know not which I should have!
(*Castle* ln 219-227)

The Bad Angel then promises him wealth and Mankind responds,

Mankind: Now, since thou hast promised me so,
I will go with thee and essay.
I won't stop for friend or foe,
But with the World I will go play,
Yes, for a while I'll go.
(*Castle* ln 237-241)

Mankind, in his direct statements to the two angels, embodies the internal uncertainty that the psychomachia, which occupies the *meta-platea*, is attempting to demonstrate. Even his decision is the direct result of the Evil Angel's tempting promises, but Mankind does mark this decision as temporary with his reference to choosing the world only "for a while." That sort of doubt is not present in Faustus' initial interaction with the Good and Bad Angels; in fact he barely seems to notice their presence even though the Angels occupy the same dramatic layer that marks their appearance in *The Castle of Perseverance*. After the Good Angel gives four lines pleading Faustus to leave magic and embrace the scripture and the Evil Angel has encouraged Faustus to aspire to be like a god, Faustus starts into a long soliloquy which seems to pick up directly from where he left off his last soliloquy, "Here, Faustus, try thy brain to gain a deity" (Marlowe 1.1.65).

Faustus: How am I glutted with conceit of this!
Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please,
Resolve me of all ambiguities,
Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
(1.1.80-83)

While one could certainly argue that these lines follow from the Bad Angel's tempting words, it remains that the Bad Angel does not need to tempt Faustus. Faustus appears to

have made up his mind at the end of his first soliloquy. So why are the Good and Bad Angels included in a scene in which they appear to have no direct function?

The second and third appearances of the Good and Bad Angels in *Doctor Faustus* are equally tangential. At the beginning of Act II, Scene i, the Angels follow another soliloquized moment, in this case one of actual doubt, but they again appear briefly. They speak only seven lines, and serve to remind Faustus of something he has already contemplated significantly in the first act: wealth (Marlowe 2.1.15-21). While in Act II, Scene iii, they appear for just four lines, they do actually manage to externalize some internal conflict. Mephistopheles has just refused to answer one of Faustus' questions, in this case a query about who is responsible for the construction of the world, and Faustus begins to consider repenting. The Good and Bad Angels debate whether or not Faustus can successfully repent and Faustus actually begins to appear penitent, but he is immediately interrupted by Lucifer who convinces Faustus not to engage in contrition. In all three of these appearances, the Good and Bad Angels never serve as the catalyst for a lasting change in intention or action, which is their primary role in *Castle of Perseverance*. Their traditional role is completely appropriated by Faustus' soliloquies. But, if this central trope of psychomachia is not being used for its traditional purpose, to externalize interior conflict, why employ it at all? Marlowe is in fact using this trope to evoke the expectations of the Morality structure. Faustus is not, like Mankind, engaging authentically in the performative aspects of the structure, instead Faustus is 'going through the motions' of Morality assuming that they will allow for eventual salvation. This leads Faustus into the performative trap that the religious performative abuse necessitates. The importance of the Good and Bad Angels' appearance in the play for

Faustus is just that: they appear. He is, because of his academic training, religious background, and occult knowledge, confusing the sign with the efficacy the sign gains when it is teamed with what that sign is meant to signify. Faustus, like the modern reader, mistakenly believes the world to be mechanical when in fact it is still rife with animism.

This process of 'going through the motions' of Morality continues when Faustus confronts the seven deadly sins. Just as in *Castle of Perseverance*, Faustus rejects some of the seven deadly sins, but unlike Mankind, Faustus' rejections are filled with more wit than sincerity. Marlowe's protagonist responds to Envy with "Away envious rascal" (Marlowe 2.3.139) and to Gluttony with "No, I'll see thee hanged. Thou wilt eat up all my victuals" (Marlowe 2.3.151-152). Faustus' words, while they do communicate a form of rejection, are more concerned with wit than with an authentic desire to distance himself from sin. In fact only a few lines later, when Lucifer questions Faustus about the performance given by the seven deadly sins, Faustus says, "O, this feeds my soul!" (Marlowe 2.3.166). This is in stark contrast to Mankind's rejection of sin:

> Mankind: . . . I forsake you, Sins, and from you flee!
> You make for man a sorry shore
> When he is beguiled in this degree:
> You mar him while you may!
> Sin, you bring a sorry store;
> You make Mankind to sink sore;
> Therefore of you I'll have no more –
> (*Castle* ln 1291-1297)

Again, Faustus is entering the psychomachia in an incomplete and presentational manner. Mankind's interactions with the sins are far more thought through and authentic, even considering that he is far more persuaded by them initially than Faustus is. Mankind fully embraces and then fully rejects sin before being tempted again at the end of his life; Faustus neither fully embraces nor fully rejects any virtue or vice during the course of the narrative, at least in an allegorical sense. Faustus is constantly attempting to hedge his

bets, and it is this inability to completely commit to a narrative, symbolized by Marlowe's blending of Morality Play with his own distinctive style, that leaves Faustus undeserving of divine mercy.

This inability to pin down Faustus into an allegorical position, or for that matter into a single easily evaluated archetypal role, leads to the construction of a character type, which Ruth Lunney describes as 'debatable.' She points to Faustus' uniquely 'detached' position with regard to the plot as the catalyst for this type of characterization, which she sees as a narrative breakthrough (124-157). But this elusive character construction has another interesting component in her mind, "'debatability' emerges in ambiguous and unstable playworlds" (Lunney 156). But what if this structure operates in the opposite direction; what if Faustus' 'debatability' destabilizes the world of the play? There is no doubt that the vast majority of Morality Plays, and for that matter plays describable as psychomachia, conclude with a reaffirmation of order. *Doctor Faustus*, on the other hand, ends with Faustus attempting a religious performative seated in his own assumptions about the nature of magical and theatrical efficacy within the world of the play. The result of the attempt is an inversion of the typical Morality structure, and in this case his performative abuses completely nullify the performative's intended effect. In *Castle of Perseverance*, when Mankind dies Mercy appears and pleads to God for Mankind's salvation:

Mercy: . . . Lord, though that Man has done more wrong than good,
If he die in very contrition,
Lord, the least drop of thy blood
For his sin makes satisfaction.
As thou died, Lord, on the rood,
Grant me my petition:
Let me, Mercy, be his food,
And grant him thy salvation.

(*Castle* ln 3211-3218)

This has resounding similarities to Faustus' own words as he attempts to beg for mercy:

> Faustus: . . . O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?
> See, see where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
> One drop would save my soul, half a drop. Ah, my Christ!
> Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
> Yet will I call on him. O spare me, Lucifer!
> Where is it now? 'Tis gone; and see where God
> Stretcheth out his arm and bends his ireful brows!
> (Marlowe 5.2.77-83)

Both refer directly to the redemptive power of Christ's blood, but Faustus is unable to access it and that inability seems to draw God's wrath upon him. Faustus' damnation, though, does not come because "he does not avail himself of mercy" (Farnham 5); it is instead due to his inability to authentically complete the religious performative. His very lines display the absence of the sort of faith that the performative requires. Faustus does not turn to Lucifer; he is unable to defend himself from Lucifer's rending and since he places his faith in the mechanical intricacies of exterior expression, while overlooking the importance of a corresponding internal state, he is unable to comprehend what he has done wrong. This can be seen in his final lines where he is rehearsing signs hoping that one will successfully complete the performative that he is unwittingly abusing; for example he promises to "burn [his] books" (Marlowe 5.2.123). Faustus' great realization in his final soliloquy is that his performance of Morality tropes has failed, but he never understands why his plan has failed. Faustus' final moments resonate with the horror that his mastery of the world and its knowledge is a complete illusion. This destabilizing approach to Faustus' character leaves the Renaissance viewer to ponder what did not work, because, like Faustus, most viewers would probably have had difficulty penetrating the play's internal logic in performance. Unlike other treatments of performative efficacy in the period, this play never explains why thaumaturgy, liturgy, and dramaturgy fail. Instead it leaves the audience members to consider which of the cultural structures that

they have used to construct their individual worldview has fallen short of its intended purpose. This doubt is one of the primary byproducts of Faustus' 'debatability.'

Marlowe, by destabilizing the performative nature of Early Modern religious and social structures, paints for his audience an extremely unstable virtual world, and it is the ambiguous performative nature of this world that separates *Doctor Faustus* from other early modern plays that tackle magical subject matter. Because Marlowe's Faustus believes he is performing the necessary steps and has the necessary understanding of the formulas essential to generating the magical, religious, or theatrical efficacy required to outwit Lucifer, but fails due to his own inability to comprehend the internal requirements of those performatives, his characterization destabilizes both the performative view of religious devotion and the belief in the transcendent power of unmediated faith for the English Renaissance viewer. The play forces Early Modern audiences to reassess the performative nature of the institutions they use to structure their personal narratives as well as the means by which they attempt to assess their own faithfulness. The viewers are asked to reflect on their own religious absolutes, lest they find themselves being damned despite having fulfilled the expectations of their own belief systems.

Contextualizing Performativity in *Doctor Faustus*

While *Doctor Faustus* is definitely not the only work of early modern English drama to tackle issues of magical efficacy, its paradigm for that efficacy separates it from other plays of the period. Marlowe's emphasis on the thin line between conjuring and prayer, as well as his emphasis on the necessity of intent, ritual, and a corresponding internal state situate him as an outlier among his contemporaries. But, beyond the play's unique approach to animism's mechanics, it would be a mistake to overlook the

additional importance of the ignorance to these mechanics that Marlowe's practitioners demonstrate. Unlike magic wielding figures from other Renaissance dramatists – like Friar Bacon, Prospero, and Elizabeth Sawyer – Faustus believes he has a clear understanding of the drama's metaphysics and that proves to be largely inaccurate. When these other magical figures fail, if they do, it comes from errors that have nothing to do with the play's magical, or for that matter theatrical, paradigm.

To put this sort of error in perspective, we need only turn to a non-magical example: *Hamlet*. In the midst of the third act, Shakespeare gives us an exceptional instance of the more prevalent approach to the type of performative efficacy that Marlowe is exploring. Just after Hamlet's *Mousetrap* has driven Claudius from the public eye, the King prays:

> Claudius: Yet what can it [repentence] when one cannot repent?
> O wretched state, O bosom black as death,
> O limed soul that, struggling to be free,
> Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay.
> Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,
> Be as soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
> All may be well.
> (3.3.66-72)

Here the play outlines Claudius' attempt at the performative ritual of prayer and from the beginning he is aware that this is an act that is difficult for him. The King clearly explains that his own internal failings are a potential impediment to the successful completion of the performative. His "black bosom," "limed soul," and "stubborn knees" have no effect on his ability to successfully complete the ritual components of prayer;[68] they impede his ability to match his internal condition to the one signified by that formula. As Targoff explains in her excellent reading of this scene, "not withstanding Claudius's apparent belief in the performative logic that shaped conformist accounts of devotional efficacy …

[68] Unless one takes the "stubborn knees" a bit more literally than I.

his efforts fail to produce any correspondence between his inward and outward self" (62). This failure is demonstrated in the lines Claudius speaks after Hamlet spares the King because the Prince does want to kill Claudius while he is praying, "My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to heaven go" (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 3.3.97-98). Anthony Dawson points out that this inability is a product of Claudius' "awareness that he cannot beg for mercy for a crime that produced effects that he is unwilling to give up" (239), but the importance of Dawson's claim is less about why he thinks he fails and more about his apparently accurate understanding of the speech-act's requirements. The element of this particular staged performative that so clearly divorces it from the logic of *Doctor Faustus* is that Claudius is fully aware of the failure of this performative. Even though it appears that he has performed all of the necessary outward steps to achieve success, he has the awareness to divine both that he has not achieved the necessary internal state and that that state is necessary for the completion of the performative. It is this awareness and understanding of failure that eludes the characters that populate Marlowe's play and that make the world it describes all the more disconcerting for an early modern viewer.

Claudius' failed prayer resonates with similarly failed religious performatives in Marlowe's play. Consider Claudius' performative abuse alongside the Pope's crossing of himself from Act III, Scene i, of *Doctor Faustus*. While they both perform similar formulas, the Pope never appears to realize the reason for the failure of his gestures. Instead, all he can do is repeat the performative hoping that it will eventually work, and when that fails he is forced to flee. Unlike the Friars, whose speech act fails due to a mechanical misfire, the reasons for the impotence of the Pope's attempts to evoke divine

protection spring from the same abuses of which Claudius is so clearly aware. Claudius' understanding seems also to significantly eclipse Faustus' comprehension. In Act II, Scene iii, Faustus speaks of existing in a very similar state to the one that Claudius describes above, "My heart's so hardened I cannot repent" (2.3.18). But when Faustus attempts to repent at the end of the play, this realization seems to have left him, "O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?" (5.2.77). In *Doctor Faustus* we never see the certainty that Claudius displays. Claudius knows what he needs in order to successfully repent; Faustus does not. And it is this unstable understanding of the world of the play which not only separates *Doctor Faustus* from other plays in the period, but also permeates its understanding of religious performatives as well as its magical and theatrical ones.

Perhaps the most natural counterpoint to Marlowe's staging of magic is Greene's much more straightforward treatment of the issue in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. Not only is Friar Bacon's magic far more absolute, so is his understanding of its inner workings. Unlike Faustus, who never demonstrates the ability to wield any actual magical power without the assistance of the demonic, Friar Bacon is able to command spirits and produce many miraculous effects without the aid of bound magical beings. In fact, Bacon's very presence, without the aid of any performative ritual, has clear efficacy on certain supernatural entities. But the most fascinating element of Greene's construction of magic when compared to *Doctor Faustus* is its infallibility. Friar Bacon only fails in one magical endeavor and in that case the failure resides not in his understanding of magic or in the generally ambiguous nature of the virtual world but in his assistant, Miles, who fails to follow the wizard's directions. Much like Claudius' prayer, magical failure in

Greene's play is always explained and the characters appear to have a clear grasp on the source of the problem. While performative logic certainly infuses some of the magic in *Friar Bacon*, it is not as consistently important nor is the issue of a match between internal and external state apparently explored.

In Scene vi of *Friar Bacon*, the plot displays an interesting cross-section of the titular character's magical abilities. Bacon uses his 'glass prospective,' which is housed in his cell at Brasenose College in Oxford, to allow Prince Edward to spy on the wedding ceremony of Lacy and Margaret which is occurring in Fressingfield over one hundred miles away. The first clearly magical element of the scene, the use of the magic mirror, has no performative element. Bacon simply tells Edward to "Stand there and look directly in the glass" (6.10). Immediately the actors playing the other half of this split scene appear on stage. Here Greene gives us a type of magic that Marlowe distinctly avoids, the use of a magic device. The device seems to function of its own accord; Bacon never has to do anything to activate it. In fact, later in the play one of the scholars who wishes to use it describes its operation as follows, "A glass prospective wherein men might see / Whatso their thoughts or hearts' desire could wish" (13.28-29). This passage demonstrates that the mirror functions completely based on the intent of the operator. It is not driven, like the performatives in *Faustus*, by an alignment of internal state with external expression, instead relying completely on a conscious thought or desire. The Prince is able to operate the device effortlessly, much like Bacon's effortless performance of his own magic.

Later in that same scene, Friar Bacon, at the Prince's behest, derails that marriage ceremony. Edward promises Bacon forty thousand crowns if he can stop the ceremony, to

which the Friar responds, “Fear not, my lord, I’ll stop the jolly friar / For mumbling up his orisons this day” (6.149-150). Here the editors of my edition insert the following, “[*Bacon puts a spell on Bungay*],” but the original text avoids any such overt stage direction. Bungay is immediately struck dumb and is unable to speak the ceremony, to which the Prince later responds, “Why stands Friar Bungay so amazed?” (6.161). Bacon appears to enact his spell completely without the awareness of Edward and thus it seems that his very will causes Bungay to lose his ability to speak. Again we see a model for magic in which external expression is largely seen as unnecessary for the construction of magical efficacy. Friar Bacon has only to think of the thing he wishes to occur and it does, a level of magical ability that appears to rival the magic we see used by Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*. Both apparently use magic as if it is second nature, neither appears in the text to exert more effort than it would take to lift a finger. This effortlessness appears to carry over to all but the most complex magical feats that Friar Bacon uses during the course of the play. Later in this scene he summons a devil to carry off Bungay and transport him to Oxford without speaking a word. Bacon also manages to keep the Prince and his men from drawing their swords a scene earlier through sheer force of will. In fact, the only time in the play where we see Bacon speak something that appears to be a spell he is making a spectacle of his abilities. In Scene ii, Burden, a scholar, questions Bacon’s powers and the Friar makes a great show of summoning a devil who brings with him the Hostess of the Bell Tavern, with whom Burden has been fraternizing. Here the spell, which is extremely short (only a line), appears to be more for impressing his audience than in order to achieve the intended effect, particularly considering that Bacon is able to perform effectively the same spell in Scene vi without

using any such performative. It would be reasonable to argue based on this that Bacon's mastery has effectively allowed him to transcend the need for performatives, which points to the fact that *Friar Bacon*'s paradigm for magic, and by extension potentially religious devotion, paints externalization as an unnecessary trapping, which is useful only as a mechanism for assisting practitioners to appropriately align their thoughts.

Greene's alternate view of the necessary structures required for magical efficacy is most clearly demonstrated during the magic contest. This competition that pits first Friar Bungay against the German magician Vandermast and then Bacon against this same Teutonic conjurer serves to separate Bacon's abilities from the other two by showcasing that he has transcended the need for performative structures. Bungay and Vandermast begin their competition with a debate, but it quickly escalates to a conjuring contest. Bungay begins by describing what he conjures, "Show thee the tree, leaved with refined gold, / Whereon the fearful dragon held his seat" (9.79-80), an act that seems in and of itself to cause the conjuring that follows and creates the requisite dramatic layering. If not, the stage direction points to some sort of physical act of conjuring (9.83-84). Either way, the gesture, the description, or both function as a distinct magical performative, which briefly places Bungay in the *meta-platea*. Vandermast continues in this vein when he summons Hercules, "Hercules, *prodi*! *Prodi*, Hercules!" (9.92). Here Greene uses an almost identical summoning ritual to the one Marlowe gives Faustus, "*Veni, veni, Mephistophile*" (2.1.29), except that Greene uses a synonym to replace the more recognizable Latin imperative. Just as in the case of Bungay's performative, Vandermast's summoning is rooted exclusively in the performative ritual he wields and is accompanied by the creation of an identical *meta-platea* juxtaposed to the *locus* that

makes up the main action. Vandermast goes on to directly order the spirit of Hercules, who occupies the *meta-locus*, in Latin and when he asks Bungay if he can stop "the fiend appearing like great Hercules" (9.99), Bungay admits that he does not possess the charms to do so. Bungay and Vandermast both appear reliant on specific performative formulas, which are divorced from any explicit internal state. But when Friar Bacon enters, his very presence has a distinct efficacy.

Bacon	Set Hercules to work.
Vandermast	Now, Hercules, I charge thee to thy task: Pull off the golden branches from the root.
Hercules	I dare not. See'st thou not great Bacon here, Whose frown doth act more than thy magic can? (9.133-137)

Bacon here appears to affect the supernatural by virtue of his reputation nor does it need him to occupy a new dramatic layer. Vandermast's spells lose their efficacy in the face of the spirit's respect for Bacon even though Vandermast is the one who appears to occupy the mediating space of the *meta-platea*. As Vandermast later puts it, "Never before was't known to Vandermast / That men held devils in such obedient awe. / Bacon doth more than art, or else I fail" (9.145-147). This idea that magic can surpass "art" is at the heart of the distinction between Greene's understanding of magical efficacy and the one outlined in *Doctor Faustus*. Bacon appears to sculpt reality through sheer force of will, a purely internal act. For the other practitioners of magic in the play, performative formulas appear to act as, at best, a tool for the less-disciplined mind to achieve these internal states. In this scene, Bacon appears to transcend the need for speech-act driven magic, but later in the play, he reverts to the need for such formulas.

Bacon's only moment of actual magical failure, the Brazen Head, comes not from a lack of understanding, but from the incompetence of his assistant, Miles, and the

weakness of Bacon's own body as they relate to completing an extremely elaborate performative. The complex spell, which has taken him seven years to set up, involves constructing a head of brass that through the use of what Bacon calls "necromantic charms" (11.15) will become animated and speak. The performative formula requires Bacon to use "magic art" (11.33) to respond so that the Head will "girt fair England with a wall of brass" (11.17). To this end, Bacon and Bungay have kept watch over the Brazen Head for sixty days, but due to exhaustion, Bacon instructs Miles to watch the Head and wake up his master if the device speaks. Of course, the Head speaks while Bacon is asleep and Miles fails in his duties. This type of magical formula appears to be in stark contrast to Friar Bacon's other magical acts in the play. Greene consistently reinforces the ease with which Bacon is able to wield supernatural power up to this point in the play. The only thing that seems to distinguish the magic of the Brazen Head from Bacon's other magic, apart from its highly performative nature, is its scale. The less-grand magical effects that Bacon uses, while effortless for him, require performatives for others for whom they are far more difficult. And when Bacon pushes his own envelope, he is forced to fall back on performative rituals in order to attempt to wall off all of England. *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* sets up a magical landscape where difficulty is dependent on magnitude and mastery. In this model performatives are a crutch for allowing magicians to perform effects that are at the extremes of their conjuring ability. Unlike in Marlowe's play, Greene's approach cleanly divorces thaumaturgy from liturgy. Spirits are subordinate entities, not greater powers that require the sorcerer to meet certain external and internal parameters in order to cajole the supernatural into action.

Shakespeare's approach to magic in *The Tempest* shares many of the same basic assumptions that appear in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. While many recent critics have discussed Prospero's magic in some detail, they have generally focused less on its mechanics in relation to other plays in the period and more on its relative moral position or historical context.[69] Prospero's relationship to the spirits that inhabit the island in many ways mirrors the authority that Bacon has over most of the supernatural entities with which he interacts. The primary distinction between these two magical paradigms is that in *The Tempest*, while these magical beings are subservient, they also appear to integrate into the mortal social order of the island. While Prospero's magic certainly played a role in the influence he wields, Ariel and the other spirits appear to have a degree of free will and follow Prospero's commands because of his position as the superior in the social hierarchy rather than because they are bound by his magic.

The indications of this alternate cultural hierarchy are implicit from the very first moments that the audience is exposed to the supernatural population of the play. When Prospero calls Ariel in Act I, Scene ii, Shakespeare gives us a very different sort of summoning sequence.

Prospero	Come away, servant, come! I am ready now. Approach, my Ariel, come!
Enter Ariel	
Ariel	All hail, great master, grave sir, hail. I come To answer thy best pleasure. (1.2.188-191)

Unlike Vandermast or Faustus, Prospero does not drop into Latin or really seem to be evoking a magical pattern, with the possible exception of speaking a variation of the word 'come,' nor does he appear to construct a new dramatic layer. Instead, Prospero

[69] For a more detailed discussion of this trajectory see Barbara Mowat's "Prospero's Book."

calls for Ariel in much the same way we would expect a master to call for a flesh-and-blood servant. In fact he uses similarly imperative language when ordering around Caliban, who certainly is not having his actions controlled by Prospero's sorcery: "What ho! Slave, Caliban! / Thou earth, thou, speak!" (1.2.316-317) and "Go, sirrah, to my cell. / Take with you your companions" (5.1.295-296). Instead of casting spells on Caliban, Prospero gives orders and then threatens to cause pain to Caliban, by way of magic, if he chooses to disobey: "I'll rack thee with old cramps, / Fill all thy bones with aches," (1.2.372-373). And he threatens Ariel in much the same way, "I will rend an oak, / And peg thee in his knotty entrails" (1.2.296-297). Prospero's art stands in for the forces that enforce authority instead of standing in for the authority itself. Unlike the spirits roused by Bungay, Vandermast, or Bacon, Prospero's control is far more political and hierarchical. He rules specific supernatural entities who maintain a degree of free will, while the spirits in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* lack that autonomy. They are controlled more like puppets; Ariel is controlled by hegemony.

One of the most interesting examples of how Ariel is made subservient more through cultural forces than magical ones is his agreement with Prospero. Ariel certainly appears to have entered into a contract with Prospero, but unlike Faustus' deed of gift this contract is both more binding and more flexible. We are first exposed to this arrangement when Ariel asks for an early release from his agreement based on his good behavior,

Ariel Is there more toil? Since thou dost give me pains,
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised
Which is not yet performed me.

Prospero How now? Moody?
What is't thou canst demand?

Ariel My liberty.

Prospero Before the time be out? No more!

Ariel I prithee,
Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakings, served
Without or grudge or grumblings, Thou did promise
To bate me a full year.
(1.2.243-251)

Ariel's awareness of the contract's potential for revision clearly separates this relationship from the sort of interactions that we see in *Doctor Faustus* or *Friar Bacon*. Faustus perceives his contract as concrete and inflexible, while Mephistopheles is constantly concerned that Faustus will be able to circumvent the contract through repentance. Their divergent understandings of the agreement reinforce Faustus' inaccurate understanding of the mechanisms that construct supernatural efficacy. Prospero instead substitutes the logic of worldly political relationships, which he appears to have mastered since his flight from Naples, for the complexities of thaumaturgical influence. The control he exerts over Ariel is predicated on the mutual benefit of feudal vassalage and carries with it the same flexibility that monarchs were granted in the period. Prospero eventually agrees to redefine the terms of Ariel's service first by reducing his period of servitude to two days (1.2.298-303) and then granting him an early release from that shortened term (5.1.320-322). That flexibility is in stark contrast to the power used by the sorcerers in *Friar Bacon*, who exert absolute control over the spirits they summon until another supersedes their skill in the manipulation of that supernatural entity. Though Bacon and Prospero, in contrast to Faustus, share the ability to construct magical effects without the intervention of spirits, their methods for interacting with those incorporeal agents differ dramatically.

In many ways the play that most parallels the model for magical efficacy found in *Doctor Faustus* is *The Witch of Edmonton*. Mother Sawyer's relationship to the devil,

which appears to her in the shape of a black dog, involves a more permanent contract and the invocation of a distinctly prayer-based magical performative, but unlike in *Dr. Faustus* that performative does not combine the need for a distinct internal state with a speech-act that authentically reflects that state.[70] *The Witch of Edmonton* in contrast privileges the external performative, which in turn does not allow for the existence of the same sort of partial efficacy found in *Dr. Faustus*. Instead we see two distinct types of performative acts: those that follow a precise predetermined formula and those that construct efficacy through a repetition of similar, morally charged, actions. The former's efficacy appears rooted in the precision of its execution, while the latter derives its effect from the sum of the development of the ethical position with which those acts are aligned and those present when those speech-acts are used. It is the acts themselves, not the internal state that leads to them, that affect the supernatural.

The cumulative performative is central to the very appearance of Tom, the Dog, and his rationale for appearing to Mother Sawyer in the first place. She first appears gathering sticks at the beginning of Act II, Scene i, before she becomes the witch that she has long been accused of being. Here, in her first lines, Elizabeth Sawyer sets up the actions which she and others have taken that lead to her eventual accidental run-in with the devil:

> Eliz. Sawyer . . . Some call me witch,
> And, being ignorant of myself, they go
> About to teach me how to be one, urging
> That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,
> Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
> Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse.

[70] Eric Byville has charted many interesting similarities between the magical paradigms of *Doctor Faustus* and *The Witch of Edmonton* in his essay, "How to Do Witchcraft: Tragedy with Speech Acts." But, due to his project's attempt to draw a clear progression from classical source material to the 'Renaissance witchcraft tragedy,' Byville's argument does not cover the important differences between the performative mechanics of the two plays.

(2.1.8-13)

The play gives us a fascinating moment of word play related to Mother Sawyer's eventual run in with the Black Dog. In this passage, she states that the town's people "teach" her to be a witch by "urging / That [her] bad tongue" has cast malicious spells upon their families and possession, but as we find out later in the scene, they have also driven her to the very acts of swearing and cursing that lead the Dog to approach her. Sawyer's literal usage of 'teach' in this passage is largely sarcastic, but when we look at it in light of the events that follow, it also appears to be strikingly accurate. Sawyer is not yet a witch, but the non-formulaic curses that she spouts eventually accumulate into a distinct supernatural effect. During her interaction with Old Banks that follows this soliloquy, he both verbally threatens and physically beats her, which in turn leads to her speaking three distinct curses, none of which appears to have any specific effect. She wishes that the sticks she was gathering would torment him (2.1.24-25), that he would suffer physical pains (2.1.27-29), and after he has left she requests that "withered may that hand and arm / Whose blows have lamed me drop form the rotten trunk" (2.1.31-32). None of these events appears to occur during the action of the play and Mother Sawyer's frustration at her powerlessness becomes more evident as she calls out for help to learn how to actually cast spells successfully, "Where and by what art learned? What spells, what charms or invocations / May the thing called Familiar be purchased" (2.1.34-36). None of these performative moments seem to have an effect on their own and they certainly do not fall into the ritualized spells that we see performed by Faustus, Vandermast, or Bungay. Instead, these individually futile attempts at performative efficacy, none of which creates a new dramatic layer, seem to accumulate into a signal to

the demonic that Mother Sawyer's soul is accessible. In fact, that repetition of curses appears to be what makes her soul accessible.

When the Dog actually appears for the first time on stage, his actions outline for the audience both the cumulative logic of his appearance and also the mechanics of the more specific performative magic that is standard for these stage sorcerers. Mother Sawyer's next moment of cursing, which occurs after Young Banks and his morris-dancing companions flee her presence, serves as the final act of blasphemy that results in the appearance of the demonic. This second soliloquy outlines her ignorance of how to be a witch and her wish for some supernatural entity to instruct her in its principles (2.1.99-120). During the course of her speech she rattles off a number of curse-like promises that again do not fit into a specific performative structure, but that clearly reinforce her position outside culturally accepted morality: she asks, "Would some power, good or bad, / Instruct me which way I might be revenged / Upon this churl" (2.1.107-109) and she states her willingness to "Abjure all goodness, be at hate with prayer, / And study curses" (2.1.112-113). At the end of her monologue, the Dog enters and greets Elizabeth Sawyer, "Ho! Have I found thee cursing? Now thou art mine own" (2.1.121). Here in the first words spoken by any supernatural entity in the play, this devil distinctly points to cursing as his point of access to Mother Sawyer. Her cursing is what allows the Dog to tempt her and to affect her physical body. As he points out later in the scene, he cannot directly harm Old Banks, on whom Sawyer seeks to wreak her revenge, because he lacks both the accumulated or momentary blasphemy that have drawn and allowed him to tempt her:

Dog Though he be curst to thee,
Yet of himself he is loving to the world
And charitable to the poor. Now men
That, as he, love goodness, though in smallest measure,
Live without compass of our reach.
(2.1.158-162)

The Dog later adds, "Until I find him as I late found thee, / Cursing and swearing, I have no power to touch" (2.1.164-165). These lines point both to the efficacy in the world of the play of repeated actions that begin to define a moral position and to the instantaneous efficacy of specific individual speech-acts. Mother Sawyer's accumulation of blasphemous language attracts the demonic to her because it guarantees the devil a certain degree of access to her, but it also increases the chances that that denizen will catch her cursing, which appears to grant access that transcends accumulated action. Old Banks, on the other hand, because of his track record of goodness (which seems unaffected by his poor treatment of Mother Sawyer) acts as an impediment to the diabolical as long as he refrains from cursing in the devil's presence. The efficacy of these acts derives not from a melding of internal state with these less pre-specified performatives. This is demonstrated by Mother Sawyer's initial apprehension seen when the Dog's identifies himself as the devil and when he asks for her soul: "Bless me! The devil?" (2.1.123) and "Out, alas! / My soul and body?" (2.1.134-135). In her soliloquy that directly precedes the Dog's appearance, Elizabeth Sawyer asks pretty directly for some supernatural entity to appear and certainly seems to imply that she expects if one does it will be evil in addition to effectively promising to turn away from prayer and other generally moral behavior. But, when the Dog confronts her, only a few lines later, she is apprehensive, actually references blessing, and initially turns down the devil's offer. Unlike Faustus, her attempts to conjure appear to be half-hearted.

This absence of a need for a matching internal state is reinforced by the key example in *The Witch of Edmonton* of the second type of speech-act that appears in the play: a more strict, formulaic type of performative that does result in the creation of juxtaposed dramatic layers. Once Mother Sawyer has promised her soul to the Dog, he teaches her what we might recognize as a spell,

> Dog When thou wishest ill,
> Corn, man or beast would spoil or kill,
> Turn thy back against the sun
> And mumble this short orison:
> *If thou to death or pursue 'em,*
> *Sanctibicetur nomen tuum*.
> (2.1.171-176)

The spell contains many of the hallmarks of the conjuring that we see in *Dr. Faustus*. It is formulaic, in this case coming from a spirit instead of a book, but in either case involving a difficult to access ritual. The spell contains both physical components and a spoken component in Latin, as well as overtly being understood as prayer, because of the repeated use of the word "orison" not just in the above quotation, but throughout the Dog's instructions. Moreover, the fact that the Latin that she uses appears to be a parodic reference to the Lord's Prayer (Corbin and Sedge 237). But unlike Claudius' prayer or the blended magical logic of *Dr. Faustus*, it is not an inability to align the internal with the external that thwarts Elizabeth Sawyer in her attempt to cast the spell nor is it a lack of understanding of the mechanics of that process; it is the Latin itself. In the sequence that immediately follows the Dog's exit, Sawyer attempts to bring him back so that he can assist her in tormenting Young Banks, Old Banks' son. But each time she attempts the spell, she gets it completely wrong. Sawyer is thwarted not by a lack of understanding of how the spell functions, but by an inability to remember the specific details of the formula. Young Banks, whose role in the play is almost exclusively comic relief, has the

spell incorrectly cast in his presence three separate times with no effect. At one point Mother Sawyer even asks him to turn toward the west, when the Dog's spell clearly indicates that she is the one whose bodily orientation is central to the ritual. Banks' son, who thinks he is working out a deal for magical aid in wooing a woman, stands there quaking in fear as nothing continues to occur. It is not until she stamps her foot, just over 45 lines later, that anything even vaguely magical occurs: the Dog returns. The next time that Sawyer uses the spell, this time with the correct Latin, the Dog appears almost immediately (5.1.24-28). In both of these cases Elizabeth Sawyer, much like Robin in *Faustus*, clearly has the appropriate internal state that matches the external performative, but unlike in *Faustus*, that state does not generate any efficacy. Instead, Sawyer effectively falls back on the model she initially used to accidently summon the devil in the first place: repetition. The more she tempts Young Banks and the more she spouts her mangled prayer, the more likely it is that devil will notice and appear. Instead of partial efficacy, Mother Sawyer relies on cumulative performative efficacy.

As *Friar Bacon*, *The Tempest*, and *The Witch of Edmonton* demonstrate, the culture of early modern England did not possess unanimous understanding of how conjuring worked or how magic functioned more generally. *Doctor Faustus*' contribution to this multifaceted discussion is predicated on developing a thaumaturgical logic that he can parallel with the liturgical and dramaturgical formulas that he is critiquing. Much as Anthony Dawson notes that Claudius' prayer creates a "kind of cannibalizing of the religious for theatrical purposes," (243) *Dr. Faustus* both violently mingles, undermines, and consumes past theatrical forms, various religious rituals, and his own magical logic for the sake of building a new dramatic approach. The play's embracing of partial

performative efficacy is at the very root of the unstable play world that serves as the foundation for the work and allows for the inherent 'debatablity' of Faustus' character.

That said, we are still left with the question of how to explain the performative mechanics behind Robin's partial success when he attempts to summon Mephistopheles. The reason derives from Robin's internal state. Robin is clearly not a particularly pious character, and he certainly is not beyond moral reproach. We have evidence that he has stolen both the goblet from the Vintner and a book from Faustus during the course of the play. Robin's lack of faith is palpable to Mephistopheles, and that, in combination with his broken attempt at citation, is enough to attract the demon's attention. But the complete absence of faith and moral fiber in Robin becomes apparent to Mephistopheles upon his arrival. There is no need to tempt Robin; Robin does a fine job of tempting himself. Robin possesses nothing that is valuable to Mephistopheles. His stock-in-trade is souls that can be converted to a state of complete faithlessness. Robin is already there. Faustus is able to exert power over Mephistopheles because his soul is 'debatable'; he is neither faithful nor faithless. It is this quality, which a modern reader might call agnosticism or doubt, that makes Faustus' soul so tempting to Mephistopheles. In the play, the 'debatable' internal state is a necessary component of successful thaumaturgy, just as faith is a required component of successful liturgy. Faustus conflates the dramaturgical and the liturgical into a sort of back-up plan for salvation. He attempts to use the tropes of Morality Play to side-step damnation but his own inability to embrace a narrative inhibits any efficacy the genre could provide. Faustus uses theatre to persuade God and magic to persuade the Devil, but neither functions in the mechanical manner he

expects. It is Faustus' lack of an absolute internal state that both grants him magical power and blocks his access to religious and theatrical efficacy.

Conclusion

While *Doctor Faustus*' exploration of the efficacy associated with religiously charged cultural performance may not immediately make apparent its relationship to 'metatheatricality,' and the play-within-the-play more specifically, its staging of social and theological ritual is central to understanding these concepts. Just as *Spanish Tragedy*, *The Malcontent*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* embrace dramatic layering as a tool for innovating within their respective dramatic genres, *Faustus* breaks down those clean distinctions and asks the audience to question what separates ritualized space from unmediated reality, and, by extension, what separates the theatrical world from the audience. If the play posits that efficacy is a byproduct of ritual and internal state in tandem, the divorcing of those two concepts, which is at the heart of the theatrical experience, undermines the potency of both. These moments give playwrights an opportunity to explore how meaning and influence are constructed because of the unique interactions present in the juxtaposition of layers of dramatic representation. Marlowe's play creates a world where meaning and representation are inherently wedded, while Kyd, for example, outlines the opposite. *The Spanish Tragedy* constructs efficacy in terms of the disconnect between performance and authentic interior states. Hieronomo is only granted authority when he occupies a fictional world divorced from the primary world of the play. As these distinctions show, playwrights in Renaissance England, by developing a mastery of this spectrum of representation, were able to create dramatic discourses that allowed them to interrogate the nature of performance on the stage itself.

As this dissertation has demonstrated, Marlowe and Kyd were not alone in harnessing the inherently innovative potential of restaged moments of cultural performance. The theatrical experimentation that these moments allow became an increasingly pronounced trait of English Renaissance drama due to their potential to communicate dramatic efficacy on varying levels. The great variety of dramaturgical properties and possibilities found in the dramatic layers that result from restaging social ritual gave playwrights like Shakespeare, Marston, Middleton, and Massinger the ability to model the layered spatial interactions that are the foundation for live performance, while also giving them the tools to delve into the accepted dramatic genres of the period. These devices, which include both those moments that could be described as 'metatheatrical' and those which exist outside the boundaries of the term, were not only present on the early modern English stage, but were instrumental in constructing the style of drama that we, as modern readers, so strongly associate with the period.

That said, it would be ill-advised to forget the importance of the 'metatheatrical' discourse more generally. This project could not hope to cover the full range of 'metatheatricality' in the period, but in describing the play-within-the-play's relationship to restaged moments of culture this dissertation has generated a lexicon and a framework that will allow for a more nuanced conversation of those dramatic devices that are loosely organized under the umbrella of 'metatheatre.' In addition, this discussion has the potential to help extricate the term 'metatheatre' from its current role as a catchall for reflexive dramaturgy. The language and approach that this dissertation develops can be used as the foundation for an examination of any one or more of the 'metatheatrical' structures that this piece has not discussed: including prologue, epilogue, induction,

soliloquy, and dumb show. Each of these individual devices, if considered discreetly, offers even more opportunities to understand the broad swath of dramatic layering present on the English Renaissance stage and the varied effects those tropes are capable of constructing.

Although this project is largely invested in developing an approach to discussing reflexive dramaturgy, that conversation is predicated on the importance of interrogating dramatic genre in terms of its engagement with the structural and cultural components of theatrical performance. Discussing a play's genre often appears deceptively simple. Most of us remember an English teacher explaining that in Shakespeare everyone ends up dead in tragedies and married in comedies. And while there is no doubt that this cliché about Shakespeare's approach to genre is not the basis for current critical discussions of the topic, there is still a tendency to assume that genre is to some degree self-evident. But the more that the unique strategies that playwrights in the period use to navigate dramatic genre are examined, the more that those distinctions begin to blur and the specific efficacy of the plays within those genres comes into focus.

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